

# A Study of the **Book of Acts**

Chapters 1-3

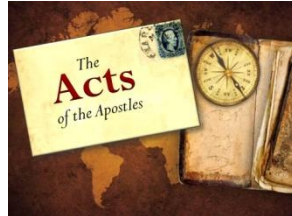
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## LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION

### ORIGINS

The book of Acts is actually Volume 2 of what was, originally, a continuous writing including Volume 1, the Gospel of Luke. Together, the two volumes account for almost 30% of the content of the New Testament – meaning that Luke made a larger contribution to the NT than either the Apostle John or Paul.

Volume 1, the Gospel of Luke, covers the life of Christ. That means it covers a period of time of about 33 years. The time span of the book of Acts is about the same length of time, so that together they equal about 66 years. (For those who may be bible Code followers, that is also the number of books in the Bible.)

Sometime in the second century, Volume 1, the Gospel of Luke, was separated from the book of Acts and grouped with the other three Gospels. Since the Scriptures are not only inspired by the Holy Spirit but also preserved by Him, this could not happen, but suppose that the Gospel of Luke had been lost to us over time.

The good thing is that we have four other gospel accounts to take up the slack.

But if the Acts of the Apostles had been lost, there would be nothing of its kind to fill in the gap. Acts is unique in the New Testament – it is the only book of history in this part of the biblical canon. It is the only written record of the history of the church in the first century.

Scholars may have been able to have recreated it from references in the epistles, yet the result would have been only inferences at least and uncertainties at best because such a compilation would be without context.

### HISTORIAN

Luke was a historian and wrote with what appears to be a meticulous concern for details. Yet he did not just relate to us a series of facts and dates and names.

He brought to life an already wonderful story by allowing us to meet the characters of the story in their historical context and to actually hear them speak.

During the time that Luke was writing the Acts of the Apostle – sometime between 62 and 66 AD, historical writing was more than just a mere chronicling of events. Writers, such as Plutarch, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Thucydides, believed that using the actual actions and words of particular people who lived through and participated in or influenced a particular event or time period would more effectively represent the history of the times.

Luke is a major player in the book of Acts, but he is never mentioned in any of the Gospels, including his own. So we do not know how much, if any, of the gospel story – the life of Christ – that Luke might have witnessed firsthand. The probability is that he did not witness any of it himself.

So how did he come to know so much detail about events of the life of Christ? Since the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were at one time a single document, the introduction to Acts is actually found in Luke 1.1-4.

Verse 2 says that Luke learned about the gospel story from eyewitnesses who recounted orally the things they had seen and experienced.

Luke, writing as a historian, gathered his material with meticulous care and recorded the verbal testimonies of those who were eyewitnesses to the life of Christ and the initial days of the church.

## **SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

As far as the Acts of the Apostles go, Luke appears to have become an integral part of the history of the early church.

According to second century church fathers, Eusebius and Jerome, Luke's home was Antioch of Syria. The city is mentioned 15 times in the NT – 14x in Acts.

A prologue to a 2<sup>nd</sup> century edition of the book of Acts says...

Luke is a Syrian, a native of Antioch, by profession a physician. He was a disciple of the apostles and afterwards accompanied Paul until the martyrdom of Paul. He served the Lord without distraction, without a wife, without children, and at the age of eighty-four he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit.

From the vantage point of such an important city in the history of the early church, Luke wrote, not just from testimony and research, but from personal encounters with the most significant people of his day.

It is very certain that he knew Peter and he certainly was a close friend of the Apostle Paul because he attended him on many of his missionary journeys and was with him until his martyrdom. It is very likely that it was through the preaching of either Peter or Paul that Luke became a Christian.

There are over one hundred people named in the book of Acts.

- He was apparently friends with Barnabas whom Luke described as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit.”
- Nicolas, a convert to Judaism from Antioch, chosen as one of the first “deacons.”
- Simeon, also called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, both teachers in the church at Antioch.
- Manaen, another teacher in the church at Antioch, had been raised up with Herod.
- Silas and Judas Barsabas were chief among the brethren of the church at Antioch.
- He stayed in the home of Philip the Evangelist (also one of the first seven “deacons” of chapter 6).

So Luke moved in a circle of great influence in the early church.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

And when he mentioned a person, he would often mention their hometown, evidence of his careful attention to detail and support for the accuracy of his writing. In fact, Luke makes reference to over 100 cities and locations. And he is as careful with his geographical references as he is with those related to people.

One thing to note is that the history of the early church told by Luke is not an exhaustive history. He only tells stories that move the main story line along. Of course, he wrote everything that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write.

The story as told by Luke is also limited geographically.

There is a table of nations in Acts 2.9-11 that lists fifteen geographical locations from which came those who witnessed the results of Pentecost.

The list begins in the east with Parthia, extending to the Indus River, moves west through modern day Turkey, then to Rome, then to northeast Africa, and to Arabia. So there is a reference to the world, yet no follow-up on the impact or growth of the church there.

Luke tells the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in great detail, possibly because he heard the story told personally from the lips of Philip while staying with him in the city of Caesarea. But we do not know what happened to the testimony of the eunuch after that.

Historical records show that the gospel had penetrated deep into the heart of China by the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, so we know that the church developed to the east.

The setting of Acts begins in Palestine, in Jerusalem, then moves north and west, but makes little to no reference to the church as it moved south and east.

One reason is that Antioch of Syria was the first church to take the Great Commission seriously and to commission missionaries to take the gospel message to the Gentiles – in other words to the people who lived westward in the empire of Rome.

Luke always made appropriate and accurate use of terms related to time, climate, and geography and apparently had a good knowledge of sailing from his use of nautical terms.

### **GREEK LANGUAGE**

Those who study such things say that Luke had a marvelous grasp of the Greek language which he would modify with reference to location and character.

In chapters 1-15, which were set mostly in the region of Palestine, his use of Greek reflects an Aramaic influence.

In chapters 16-28, which are mostly in a Gentile setting of the westward empire, he used Greek that was very fluent, almost classical in nature.

### **TITLE – APOSTLES**

In most Bibles, the title of the book of Acts is “The Acts of the Apostles.”

First, make a note that this title was not assigned to the book by either Luke or the Holy Spirit. It was apparently assigned to the book by Irenaeus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century

It's a strange title when you realize that the Apostles are only mentioned once (Acts 1.13). Nine of the Apostles are never referenced again throughout the entire book.

James, the brother of the Apostle John, is mentioned in Acts 12.2, but only to tell us that James was martyred by Herod. Another exception is the Apostle Peter, who is the principle character of the book through the first 12 chapters.

The principle character throughout the remainder of the book (chapters 12-28) is the Apostle Paul – not one of the original 12 apostles, but he who was especially appointed to the office by Christ.

Some would argue that, since the book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, then the main character is actually Jesus Christ – so that the book should be entitled “The Acts of Christ.”

Others would argue that, since the characters in the story could never have achieved what they achieved in their own power, the book should be entitled “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

### **TITLE – ACTS**

A second word of the title that is significant is the word “acts.”

The Greek word here is *praxeis*, which in a word means “deeds” or “actions.” It is used to refer to a type of literature which depicts the outstanding deeds of a prominent person, such as a king, a general or a hero. It relates “various heroic acts and adventures” of leading persons.

Acts, then, is the story of men and women who accomplished more than they could have imagined because they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit.

It is not a story of what they believed, but about the things they did based on what they believed.

Acts – *praxeis* – is belief in action – faith in practice.

It is interesting to note that, at first, believers were not called Christians, but as followers of the “way” – a word which refers to action or a course of conduct.

The first century believers were not identified as Christians because of what they believed, but because of what they achieved.

## HEROES

When we study different cultures, we discover that one thing they all have in common is a “hero myth” – a story or many stories of people who started out as ordinary individuals but overcame unbelievable odds to overcome evil, to defeat an enemy, or to achieve a goal.

Our culture is no different. We are inundated with such stories. We read books and go to movies and even play video games depicting heroes in action. The idea may even explain why video games are so popular. They are an opportunity for couch potatoes and rug rats to achieve fame – to achieve hero status – at least in their own minds or in the minds of their peers who desire the same goal.

Another common myth among almost every society in the world is the harvest myth. This myth typically refers to a harvest god who dies, is buried (like the seeds), and is resurrected with each new crop.

C.S. Lewis did not believe in Jesus because he saw Jesus as simply the harvest myth of the Jews.

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *Lord of the Rings*, and a friend of C.S. Lewis, challenged his conclusion and offered a different perspective on the harvest myth.

What if the Creator implanted the concept of the harvest myth in every culture to prepare them for the coming of the on true “harvest God” who would come and die, be buried, and resurrected?

He asked Lewis if the gospel story felt like a myth or like history.

Lewis answered that it felt more like history – that no myth ever felt like the gospel felt. That realization eventually led C.S. Lewis to faith in Christ.

So the question is asked, Why does every culture have a hero myth?

And why does every hero myth in every culture have the same elements?

The story is always the same. The plot seldom changes. The outcome is always the same.

Think of *Lord of the Rings*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Gladiator*. While the settings changed, the story line is the same. And we never seem to get tired of it.

Why do we get so passionately involved in sporting events to the point that we cheer and scream and jump and down and hug one another when our team wins – especially when our team is the underdog and comes from behind to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat?

Could it be that God has implanted in the heart of each of us the role of hero, but we just never actualize it?

With our movies and books and sports and video games – are we just living out vicariously through the actions of others the call God has put into our own hearts?

Maybe that is why we love to listen to missionaries tell the stories of overcoming adversities and obstacles to the Gospel in foreign fields.

Suppose God created within us this capacity to see the reality of the world around us and to get actively involved in accepting the challenge?

What might we achieve if we simply did something? Frodo had no idea of what was going on in Middle Earth until he took up the quest of the ring.

I read the story of one father who watched the animated film *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* with his young son. Both were enthralled by the movie. At its conclusion, the young son turned to his father and asked, “Dad, will you teach me to be a hero?”

The book of Acts is about heroes of the faith – ordinary people doing extraordinary things by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the story of “the birth of the church, and the transformation of discouraged and fearful followers of Jesus into fearless preachers of the Gospel.”

This “Record of the Doings of the Early Believers” is the only book of its kind in the New Testament.

It has a purpose – to inspire us to *praxeis* – to act based on what we truly believe.

## LESSON 2: TRANSITION

### ACTS 1.1-11

#### I. PURPOSE IN THE WRITING OF ACTS (v. 1)

**Acts 1:1** *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus...*

As we noted last week, this phrase ties the book of Acts to Luke's Gospel.

Luke is writing specifically to a person named Theophilus about whom we know nothing other than his name.

Apparently Luke has written to Theophilus as accurate an account of the life of Christ as he was able to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in volume 1, commonly referred to as the Gospel of Luke, and now he is writing volume 2.

Even though the book is entitled "The Acts of the Apostles," the book does not talk about the works or deeds of the Apostles, except for Peter and Paul.

The book is a continuation of what Jesus began to do and to teach. He is the main character in both the Gospel of Luke as well as in Acts in the person of the Holy Spirit – mentioned 57 times in the story, leading many to say that the actual title should be "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

Christianity is not about how men can take advantage of a loving God, but how God uses men to accomplish His goals and His mission. The book of Acts is how the Holy Spirit worked through the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouths of men – the same plan that He continues today.

The deeds and teachings that Jesus – in the flesh – began in the Holy Spirit He would now complete through the flesh of those who make up His body – the church.

When Luke wrote to Theophilus, he wrote...

*...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

It is significant that Luke wrote this verse as he did, putting the verbs in this order, "to do," and "to teach."

Luke put Christ's works before His words – his behavior before His beliefs.

The lesson is that doing must precede teaching if teaching is to have its intended effect. If we are to be successful in sharing the Gospel message with the world, we, too, must demonstrate the love of Christ if we wish to have others listen to us as we discuss the love of Christ.

You may remember the time that Jesus walked with Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35) following the resurrection.

**Luke 24:17-19**

Notice the order of what Cleopas said – that Jesus was "mighty in deed and word."

Thinking in these terms shines a different light on another familiar scripture...

**John 1:4** *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

The light that men saw was the life that Jesus lived, not just the words He taught.

When Jesus called His disciples in **Matthew 4.19**...

He went about demonstrating what He had called them to do (v. 23), then He sat down and (5.2) "opened his mouth, and taught them..."



## II. PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES BY JESUS (v. 2-3)

*...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

Jesus promised His disciples that, if they followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. The book of Luke is the story of Jesus developing the twelve so that, once empowered by the Holy Spirit, they would be able to found and organize and promote the church.

In these verses, Luke reviews the teachings of Jesus and how He prepared the disciples.

The first thing we notice about Jesus' teaching is that it was...

### 1. Persistent (Acts 1.2-3)

*Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up...*

The message was a critical one and Jesus only had three years to bring these men up to speed on the eternal plan of God. He taught with determination and perseverance the message of salvation and the call of God for men to worship Him and to serve Him.

Even after the resurrection, for 40 days, Jesus continued to teach the disciples and to provide them with "*many infallible proofs*" of the truth of His resurrection, for this is the foundation of the Gospel – not just that Jesus died for the sins of man, but that He conquered death and the grave.

Jesus reminded them of the things He had taught them and of their importance at the end of Luke's first volume.

**Luke 24.44-48**

Not only was Jesus persistent in His teaching, He was also...

### 2. Consistent (Acts 1.3c)

*"...speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."*

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we find 88 references to the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, which are synonymous terms.

**Matt. 6:33** *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

As recorded by Matthew, it was the topic of the first sermon Jesus preached at the beginning of His ministry following His temptation by Satan as recorded by Matthew.

**Matt. 4:17** *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

**Mark 1:14** *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,*

The result of Jesus' persistency and consistency is that His teaching was also...

### 3. Effective

Throughout the book of Acts, every sermon is centered on the resurrection – the "baseline doctrine" of the Gospel – and focused on the kingdom of God.

## III. PROMISES MADE TO THE DISCIPLES (v. 4-11)

### 1. Power (v. 4-8)

Jesus promised the disciples that when the kingdom of God comes, it will come with power.

Earlier, in **Luke 24.49**...

This verse is actually a fulfillment of **Isaiah 2.1-3**.

Instead of allowing the disciples to go their homes in Galilee, Jesus told them instead to return to Jerusalem and just wait.

The kingdom of God has not been fully revealed and will only be fully revealed when Christ comes back to Earth, not as Savior, but as Sovereign – when He will set up His kingdom here on this Earth to rule for a thousand years.

Yet God allowed men to begin to see that power revealed in the life, and ministry, and miracles that Jesus performed while on the earth, the resurrection being the greatest of these demonstrations of power.

Now, God is about to do something fantastic in the lives of the disciples and of all believers through the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus begins to relate to the disciples what will happen once they are empowered, but gets interrupted by a question from the disciples.

I do not mean to diminish the importance of any scripture because God saw fit for it to be included in the text.

But let's read these verses as they might have been written had there been no question asked.

### **Acts 1.4b-5, 8**

Now go back to the question of the disciples.

### **Acts 1.6-7**

Jesus is the greatest teacher that ever lived, yet it seemed that the disciples were some of the poorest students at times. At least, it seems they were slow to learn. They were not satisfied with **what** Jesus was planning; they needed to know the **when**.

Even at this late date – after all that they had seen and heard – they were still concerned, not with the power and authority that Christ was bestowing on them, but on the status of the kingdom – meaning the earthly rule of an earthly king and the overthrow of the Romans.

Yet Jesus was not exasperated by their difficulty in understanding. He recognized their sense of anticipation. He answered their question and continued on with the theme.

**Not many days from now**, He said, you will have an experience unlike anything you have ever experienced. It will mark your life forever and radicalize your witness and make you the most effective teachers that have ever testified of the truth of the kingdom of God.

The word for “power” is *dunamis*, the root of the word for dynamite. There will be an explosion of grace so great that it will be experienced by men at the farthest reaches of man's habitation and the extent of man's time on earth.

So, first there was a promise of power, then a promise related to...

## **2. Prophecy (v. 9-11)**

The final two months of the disciple's lives had been filled with wonder following upon wonder. The arrest and crucifixion of Christ followed by His resurrection and His appearances and teachings over the last 40 days had to make a lasting impression.

The Ascension had to be one of the most spectacular events witnessed by the disciples. You can imagine their amazement as they stood staring up into the clouds.

But God was not done with amazing them that day, for while they stood gazing up “*two men stood by them in white apparel.*” This would have been startling enough, but then these two men spoke and explained to them that, just as Jesus was taken up, “*someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!*” (NLT)

Of course, we are all familiar with that promise repeated by Paul in **1 Thess. 4.16-18.**

Whether or not the disciples were comforted by the words of these two men, it is probably safe to assume that their level of anticipation was heightened even more than it had been by the promise of Jesus of the power that would one day come to them.

The Ascension took place 40 days after the resurrection. Pentecost (which means “50<sup>th</sup> day”) was only ten days away.

Only ten more days and both promises would be fulfilled – at least in part.

- Jesus would come down on the disciples while they were meeting in an upper room
- And they would receive a power unlike anything any man had ever experienced before.

But the disciples did not know it would be ten days. As far as they knew, it could be another 40 days or another 40 years. So, filled with anticipation...

**Luke 24.51-52a, Acts 1.12-14, Luke 24.53.**

## LESSON 3: ANTICIPATION

### ACTS 1.12-26

#### I. PURPOSE IN THE WRITING OF ACTS (v. 1)

The book is a continuation of what Jesus began to do and to teach. He is the main character in both the Gospel of Luke as well as in Acts in the person of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts is how the Holy Spirit worked through the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouths of men – the same plan that He continues today – to accomplish the sovereign will of Almighty God.

#### II. PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES BY JESUS (v. 2-3)

Luke reviewed how Jesus prepared the disciples by His appearances after the resurrection and through His persistent and consistent teaching about the kingdom of God and how the disciples would be empowered to carry out the mission of the kingdom.

#### III. PROMISES MADE TO THE DISCIPLES (v. 4-11)

One was prophetic. Two men promised that Jesus would return in the same way that He ascended at some undesignated future date. The disciples seemed to have felt that it would be during their lifetimes.

And in a form, it was fulfilled during their lifetimes in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Men and the church body could not unite with Jesus because He was in bodily form. But through ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, not only could men be united to and in Christ, but the entire church could be bonded in the unity that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The second promise was of the power and authority that would come upon the disciples when the Holy Spirit descended.

But for now, the disciples were commanded to return, not to their homes, but to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was ten days away – a long time in itself – but for the disciples, the time was indefinite.

They just were supposed to wait.

But the question is, “For how long!” Especially when you are already pent up with all of this preparation, and prophecies, and promises and the anticipation of such great things to come.

The disciples didn’t know exactly what to expect. Although it seems they felt these promises were imminent, as far as they knew, they might be required to wait a lifetime. And it’s not knowing that makes waiting such a difficult thing to do.

Maybe because of their impatience and their desire to see God moving, we see what some have labeled as the...

#### IV. PRESUMPTION OF THE DISCIPLES (v. 12-26)

The disciples did as they were instructed and returned to Jerusalem where the Bible says they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (Acts 1.14) and were daily in the Temple, praising and blessing God (Luke 24.53).

During one of these meetings, Peter, who appeared to be the leader among the fellowship of disciples, spoke to the congregation of 120 concerning the vacant chair among the Apostles as a result of the defection of Judas and his subsequent death.

It seems that Peter has been studying the scriptures (the OT), and has found justification in them for filling the 12<sup>th</sup> chair.

Peter is speaking in **verses 16-17, 20-22**.

One question that comes to mind is why Peter and the disciples felt the need to fill this 12<sup>th</sup> position of the Apostles?

It seems that there was a sentiment among the early believers that the kingdom of God could not come unless there was a full slate of twelve apostles.

Jesus had said that in the kingdom of God, the twelve disciples will sit on twelve thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30)

Later, the Apostle John wrote in the Revelation concerning the Holy City that there would be twelve gates, each with the name of one of the tribes of Israel written on it, and twelve foundations, each with the name of one of the twelve Apostles written on it.

So the belief was that a 12-fold witness among the Apostles was required if the Church was going to represent itself to the Jewish nation as the culmination of the kingdom promised by God in the covenants of the OT.

Some have used these verses as justification for the idea of apostolic succession – that God always intended for the leadership of the Apostles to continue and that the bishop of Rome was the source of that leadership.

Since it was necessary to fill the vacancy of Judas Iscariot, then it is necessary that the apostolic leadership line not be broken.

However, Peter defined regulations or requirements for those who were recognized as Apostles (as opposed to disciples):

1. They had to have been present during Jesus' entire earthly ministry from His baptism by John through the ascension.
2. They had to bear witness to the resurrection.

These requirements are not transferrable from one generation to the next, so there can never be anything like apostolic succession.

Furthermore, we need to understand that Judas was replaced, not because he died, but because he defected.

The Apostle James was beheaded (Acts. 12.1-2), but there is no record that there was ever an effort to replace him.

Verses 18-19 are parenthetical. In other words, it is not Peter who is talking here, but Luke, explaining to Theophilus about the death of Judas Iscariot.

In **verses 20-22**, Peter quotes from two texts: Psalm 69.25 and Psalm 109.8.

Psalm 69 falls into a category of Psalms referred to as Messianic or Passion Psalms that are prophetic concerning the life and the passion of Christ.

It is a chapter referred to by the Jews as the "Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer" chapter. (cp. v. 21)

The church very early identified Christ as the Servant of the Lord and the Righteous Sufferer mentioned in the Psalm. It is quoted at least five times in the NT, once by Jesus in reference to himself (John 15.25).

It is also one of a type of Psalms referred to as Imprecatory Psalms, meaning that the psalm is a type of prayer which calls for God to invoke His wrath on an enemy. Psalm 109 also fits this category of Psalm.

***Psalm 69:24 Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. 25 Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents.***

It is interesting that Peter would use this verse because it seems to say that the place of the persecutor (or in the case of Judas, the defector) should remain vacant instead of being filled.

It is also a prayer, the implication being that a man is praying for God to act, so that the empty chair would be the work of God.

Then Peter followed that up with...

***Psalm 109:8 Let his days be few, and let another take his office.***

Peter seems to interpret this last verse as allowing for two things to happen:

- The chair of Judas Iscariot needs to be filled as soon as possible
- The current slate of disciples has the authority to fill this position.

There are questions about how Peter came to this conclusion based on these scriptures.

For example,

- Why would Peter quote a verse (Psalm 69.25) that seems to indicate that the chair of a defector should remain empty, then quote a verse that seems to contradict the first verse?
- If the “let” in Psalm 69 refers to the work of God in making a dwelling empty, why would the word “let” in Psalm 109 not mean the same thing – that it is the responsibility and the privilege of God to fill the vacancy?

***Luke 6:13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:***

Since it was Jesus who chose the original 12, why should He not be the one to fill the empty chair of Judas?

***1 Cor. 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

Some have argued that Peter struggled to correctly interpret these verses because the Holy Spirit had not yet come to help him with the discernment of Scripture.

In **verse 23**, the apostles chose two men who fit the qualifications for the office of apostle: Joseph and Matthias. Whether these were the only men who qualified or the only qualified men who were chosen the Bible does not say.

Yet these are the only two options placed before God in the prayer of **verse 24-25**.

One could argue that the disciples had limited the scope of God's authority. It was as if they were saying, “God, here are the two options that we think will work here. Which one do you approve?”

Then **verse 26**...

Casting lots sounds like gambling or a very whimsical way of determining the will of God, but it was a customary way to deal with the question of God's will in the OT economy.

- Aaron chose the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement
- Palestine was divided after the conquest
- Discover of Jonathan's breaking of Saul's vow
- Regulation of services in the Jerusalem Temple
- Sailors determined that Jonah was responsible for the storm that threatened to sink their ship

This is the only example of this method of determining God's will in the NT.

**Proverbs 16:33** *The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.*

Apparently this was a legitimate method of discerning the mind of God before the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So the question comes up at this point: Were the disciples right or wrong in choosing Matthias as a replacement for Judas Iscariot?

**Argument that they were right:**

- The decision appears to be based upon a study of the Scriptures, prayer, and discussion by the entire group.
- There is subsequent mention of the twelve (Acts 2:14; 6:2) and of the apostles (30x in Acts), which would appear to include Matthias.
- There is never any word of condemnation, rebuke, or criticism for the action which was taken here.

One commentator said that "under God's direction," the number of apostles was restored to its full complement of twelve. Peter had apparently searched the scriptures for an answer and probably prayed about the situation, and this was the answer God had given him.

**Argument that they were wrong:**

Other commentators are of the opinion that Peter and the disciples were being presumptive by naming a person to replace Judas Iscariot.

To presume means to "suppose that something is the case on the basis of probability; take for granted that something exists or is the case."

They were instructed to go to Jerusalem and wait on God, but felt that, in the meantime, they may as well busy themselves with doing things that might speed the plan of God along.

One commentator referred to what happened in these verses as "Doing what comes naturally."

They had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit and had not received the power of discernment or of doing the work that they would have after Pentecost. That is why Jesus instructed them to return to Jerusalem and wait.

Then there is the special case of the Apostle Paul who was specifically chosen by God to be an apostle. Paul constantly defended his call and his claim to the apostleship, which was apparently objected to by some of his contemporaries.

**1 Cor. 9:1** *Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?*

**1 Cor. 15:9** *For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am...*

**2 Cor. 1:1** *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...*

Paul's defense of himself as an apostle seems to support the idea that apostles are not chosen by men, but only by God.

It seems that Paul even questioned the requirements for apostleship.

(See **1 Cor. 9.1b** above.)

**2 Cor. 12:12** *Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*

So, once again, were the disciples right or wrong to choose Matthias to replace the vacancy of Judas Iscariot?

And why would God inspire Luke to record this incident, which consumes more of chapter one than all other subjects combined?

Is the question of rightness or wrongness even important in this story? Luke never commented on the rightness or wrongness of the decision and there is no record that God ever rebuffed the disciples for choosing Matthias.

Maybe the idea that we need to understand whether this decision was right or wrong indicates that we are thinking wrong about the purpose of the book of Acts.

As one person asked, “Do we really believe God’s purposes are achieved only when we do the ‘right’ thing? Then we are wrong, dead wrong!” (Bob Deffinbaugh)

Was God obligated to use Matthias as the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle if the disciples made a right decision?

And was God obligated not to use Matthias if the disciples made a wrong decision?

The answer to both questions is, “No.”

### **Bob Deffinbaugh**

I believe the account of the selection of Matthias is a key to the message of the entire work (of Acts), the message that God was sovereignly at work, through His Spirit, to accomplish His will in ways in which men would never have conceived and which they would not believe even if they were told. In this way, God receives the glory, and not men.

Acts is the account of the workings of a sovereign God, working through fallible men and women. This selection of Matthias is but the first of many of man’s plans (good or bad) which God will set aside for a better plan – His plan.

### **Application:**

When we assess the proposition of Peter and the decision of the disciples, we need to consider our own situations, both as individuals and as a church.

Peter sought the will of God.

- The Bible doesn’t say so, but I believe Peter first prayed for God to reveal His will.
- He searched the Scriptures seeking an answer to his prayer.
- And he sought the counsel of his peers in the fellowship concerning the question at hand.

The result was that the fellowship of disciples made a decision which they interpreted to be the will of God. The used, what for us, was an unconventional method of achieving that will (casting lots).

Then they moved forward.

All of the evidence that we have says that, after making their decision, they never looked back but left the results up to God.

In spite of our motives, our best planning, and all of our hard work, God is not obligated to use our efforts to achieve His perfect will. That is what is meant by the sovereignty of God.

We will never know if God is in our decision or not until we begin to write our after-action report. We may discover that He achieved the goal in spite of all our efforts or we may discern half way through that God has opened a door to success that we never expected to even see, let alone open.

“While we do not always know, at the moment, whether God is in what we are doing, the really important thing is whether or not we are in what God is doing.” (Bob Deffinbaugh)



## Lesson 4: Immersion

### Acts 2.1-4

#### Verse 1 – Dependence & Expectation

##### ***And when the day of Pentecost***

The celebration of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai which took place exactly 50 days after the Passover.

##### ***Was fully come***

“to arrive as the timely moment for an event to take place”

***Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,***

##### ***They were all***

Most likely meaning all 120 of the disciples identified in chapter 1.

##### ***In one accord***

*Homothumadon*

Compound word meaning “one and the same” (*homos*) and “temperament or mind” (*thumos*). It means with one mind, with unanimous consent in one accord, or all together.

*Thumos* refers to the “mind or soul as the principle of life, the will, desire, emotion, passion, indignation, anger, wrath.” (Z)

A unique Greek word, used 12x in NT – 10 in the Book of Acts.

*Homothumadon* is a compound of two words meaning to “rush along” and “in unison”.

- Musical imagery
- a number of notes are sounded
- all different,
- yet all harmonize in pitch and tone.

“As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ’s church.”

##### ***In one place***

Probably all 120 disciples meeting together, not in just one room, but in one building.

There is no indication from these verses that this event would ever be repeated or that it should ever be expected to be repeated. There will be no repeat of Pentecost.

- God created and became imminent in it only once.
- The Law was given at Mt. Sinai only once.
- Christ came in the flesh only once.
- The Holy Spirit came into the world only once.

#### Verse 2 – Simplicity & Uniqueness (read through v. 4)

Luke tells of this momentous event in a very matter-of-fact way. There is no fanfare. Luke did not try to sensationalize or to embellish this event – he just reported what happened.

Yet there is a struggle when trying to describe something that is indescribable. Luke used several terms and descriptors to try to relate the effect that the Holy Spirit's coming had on the group of disciples.

***And suddenly***

The event – this baptism in the Holy Spirit – happened without any warning, even though everyone there was expecting something to happen.

When the event took place, it happened without warning and in a striking and fantastic manner so that there could be no doubt that they had experienced the work and the presence of God.

It was certainly something they would never expect.

***there came a sound***

The word is used to describe the roar of the sea as it crashes against a rocky shore.

It was not a wind, but a roaring or a reverberation, an echoing sound as if it had been a mighty wind borne along violently, like the sound of a tornado.

***as of a rushing mighty wind – a violently blowing wind***

This is a simile – a technique used to try to create in someone's mind a relationship between a remarkable or unexplainable event and something they may be familiar with.

The sound was so great that it moved them as if they had been standing in a violent and tempestuous gale.

It was invisible, yet overwhelmingly powerful.

This is the same word used to describe a sailing ship being driven before the hurricane, carried along by a power beyond the control of the ship's captain and crew.

It is the same word used in...

***2 Peter 1:21 ...prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

Throughout Scripture, the same word that is translated "wind" is also translated "spirit."

***John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."***

This was like a wind, but even more like a sustained breath – a force and a power that affected their very hearts and souls and minds.

Man was made from the earth – of substance that was created and had no prior existence until it was created. It is cursed and will one day be destroyed so that God can replace it with a new earth.

But the spirit of life that God breathed into man was not created. It is the very eternal breath of God – that which has no beginning and no end and which connects the temporary life of the flesh to the eternal existence found only in God.

***from heaven***

Not a reference directly to God, but to say that it originated from the atmosphere around us which is where the kingdom of God is located. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is ***at hand***."

Yet it is a reference to the supernatural source of the sound. It did not happen by nature, but by God doing something that had never been done before. It is an indication of the relationship between eternal God and finite creation – a reminder that even the very elements of the Universe are subject to His lordship.

***and it filled all the house***

Not the wind, but the sound filled the house. The building was saturated with sound so that the effect was as a great torrent of wind.

***where they were sitting.***

It is interesting that Luke should go to the extent of including this degree of detail in his telling of the story of Pentecost to Theophilus.

The word does not have to mean they were literally sitting down. It can be used to designate that they were assembled together.

Nevertheless, the significance of the word is that they were doing nothing – they did nothing to prompt or to encourage or to cause the coming of the Holy Spirit.

It was the sovereign God working and acting in His time and His own manner and in ways that we would never predict or expect.

If we were to repeat all of the events of the day and did everything that those Jews were doing that day, we would not be able to repeat the event.

**Verse 3 - Inclusion*****And there appeared unto them cloven tongues***

There was both an auditory and a visual manifestation of the event of Pentecost.

Once again, notice that this is an analogous statement – a metaphor. In other words, there were not really tongues that came down. The witnesses in the house experienced a physical manifestation of the spirit that they could best describe as tongues.

***like as of fire,***

These tongues reminded the disciples of fire. The phrase “tongues of fire” refer to the pointed appearance of flame as it reaches out from the source of origin.

It is very likely that right about here, Theophilus remembered what Luke had written him earlier.

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**Deffinbaugh**

Fire is frequently a symbol of God's presence.

- Moses – the burning bush in Exodus 3
- At Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:18
- The pillar of fire that accompanied the Israelites (Exodus 13:21ff.)
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24)

***and it sat upon each of them.***

The experience was both universal and individual for every member that was in the house.

“Cloven” does not mean that each tongue of fire was split, but that the fire that appeared in the room was cloven – cut in pieces, evenly distributed. And it came to rest on the heads of each person in the room.

**Verse 4 - Expression*****And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,***

***Illustration:*** Mock CW battle, Andersonville, GA

In my illustration, the sense of awe at the vibration of the cannons was memorable, but the effect on the body was only temporary.

The sense of this verse is that the Holy Ghost came, never to leave again. He is a permanent fixture in the hearts of individual Christians and in the life of the Church.

He came once for all. This event called "Pentecost" will not happen again.

Words from hymns:

- Come, Holy Comforter... Spirit of holiness, On us descend. ("Come Thou Almighty King")
- O send Thy Spirit, Lord, Now unto me. ("Break Thou the Bread of Life")

***Romans 8:9 ...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.***

***Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"***

***and began to speak***

Any person who is filled with the Holy Spirit is, by default, the mouthpiece of God.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...

I have a pastor friend of mine who, during an online discussion concerning God's call of the lost to salvation, said this:

"I wish once the Spirit was given control He would never give it up, but unfortunately I can take it back when I feel like it."

Here is my response:

I do not believe you can take it back. Once surrendered, I am a new creation. I cannot quit being a new creation by my will. The whole concept of becoming a Christian is that my will is absorbed into that of Christ, and I could never take it back because the life that I live is no longer mine, but His. To feel that there is some point at which I can take it back is to hold on to that point so that I can take it back if I want to, and, therefore, I never really surrendered to His lordship in the first place.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is once for all and intended for all who acknowledge the lordship of Christ. In fact, the Bible is very clear that no man can acknowledge that Christ is lord unless he is empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit.

***1 Cor. 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that...no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.***

***with other tongues,***

Very literally and very obviously from the context, this means that the disciples began to speak in languages that they had not previously learned but that they were familiar with as known languages.

They began to speak in languages that were not their native language. (cf. v. 5-8)

There were three primary purposes for this phenomenon, and neither of them had anything to do with the degree of righteousness of the speaker or with their own personal salvation.

1. The fulfillment of OT prophecy.

***Isaiah 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.***

***1 Cor. 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.***

2. As an affirmation of the work of the Gospel and the baptism in the Holy Spirit of these disciples.
3. The fulfillment of Acts 1.8. (cf. v. 9-11)

***as the Spirit gave them utterance.***

The coming of the Holy Spirit, while expected, was never sought, and it came, not selectively, but equally upon everyone in the house.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is strictly limited to the sovereign will of God. He gifts it to whom He pleases when He pleases and not by request or merit.

The church had already been formed, but now God breathed into it the Spirit of life eternal.

## Lesson 5: Attraction

### Acts 2.5-13

#### Verse 5 – Residents

##### ***And there were dwelling in Jerusalem...***

A diaspora is an event of dispersion – where a people group, for various reasons, is spread throughout a region of the world or even around the world by the events of history.

The Jews were dispersed the first time when the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and dispersed the inhabitants – the ten lost tribes of Israel – to the ends of the earth.

The second dispersion came when Babylon destroyed Judah – the southern tribes of the nation of Israel – and carried the inhabitants off into captivity. Seventy years later, when the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland, most stayed in Babylon.

To escape the destruction of the Babylonians, many Jews escaped into Egypt and an extensive colony was established there.

In 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation of Israel ceased to exist. The Jews were scattered all around the known world as a result.

Those earlier dispersions came, we know from the biblical record, as a result of the judgment of God against the nation of Israel. Yet, as in all things, what on its surface appears as a terrible event, was, in fact, God setting the stage for the events of Acts 2.

Every year, thousands of people would travel from the far corners of the empire to worship at Jerusalem.

When Titus destroyed Jerusalem around 70-72 AD, it was during the period of Pentecost and it was estimated that there were as many as three million Jews in Jerusalem at that time.

Many of them had second homes that allowed them to take up residence during the entire festival period.

Others had actually migrated back to Jerusalem to be near the Temple. The word “dwelling” in verse 1 could refer to either of these groups.

##### ***...Jews, devout men...***

If there were any Gentiles among those who responded to this event, the Bible does not mention them. All that came running were identified as “devout,” meaning that they were cautious not to offend God by their commitment to obey all of His commandments.

The entire period from Passover to Pentecost was a time of celebration for all Jews who were faithful to observe the Law and the feasts that God had set in place during the times of Moses.

And the Bible says they came...

##### ***...from every nation under heaven.***

This means “wherever the Jews were dispersed.”

The world was represented among those who were drawn to this house in Jerusalem that day. It was the beginning of the fulfillment of Acts 1.8 – the carrying of the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth – for many of these were pilgrims who would return home after a period of time and carry their faith with them.

It is also another incident in Scripture where we see the events of history bearing fruit within the will of God long after their initial occurrence.

When Sennacherib and his army of Assyrians conquered the northern tribes of Israel, they were just doing what the armies of great empires did in their day – they conquered their neighbors.

They drove the inhabitants of the land into exile and replaced them with colonists from their own country. The Jews were driven to other countries and lands in distress and out of fear for their lives.

Yet even then God was looking forward in time to this particular day – this feast of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit would breathe life into the living organism of the church and the message of Christ would then be carried back to those homes in what had become the native lands of the Jews.

***Micah 5:7 Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man.***

### Verses 9-11 – Regions

Verses 9-11 identify fifteen nations that were among those represented among those who heard the sound and the disciples speaking in their own languages and dialects and who later heard the sermon by Peter that led to so many coming to Christ for salvation.

### Verse 6-8 – Response

***And when this sound occurred...***

Whether it was the sound of a mighty rushing wind or the sound of the disciples speaking in unlearned languages, this was an event of tremendous magnitude.

Most commentators seem to think that it was the sound of the mighty rushing wind that attracted the people from all over Jerusalem to come to the house where the disciples were meeting.

I imagine a tremendous sound that was similar to a sonic boom that shook, not only the house they were meeting in, but the city itself.

For the Bible says...

***...the multitude came together...***

...that the people came running towards the place in a mob, pushing and shoving in a tumultuous manner to see what all of the disturbance was about.

***...and were confused...***

First there was the crowd and then there was confusion.

The word means that they were violently moved and agitated when they arrived at the house because here was this band of Galileans speaking in every language represented by those in the crowd.

***...because everyone heard them speak in his own language.***

***Acts 2:7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"***

There is a temptation here to make this more a miracle of hearing than a miracle of speaking, but the speaking is the miracle because the Holy Spirit came down and filled the disciples, not the crowd.

Either way, the experience was such that it caused a great deal of consternation among the listeners.

In verse 6, there was a crowd of people who were confused.

Verse 7 says they were amazed and in awe.

- Amazed – to stand outside of oneself. They were affected in both body and mind. They just did not know what to think about all of this.
- Awe – They marveled. Their wonder and admiration at what was happening in front of them just continued to grow and may have been tinged with some degree of fear.

In the KJV, verse 6 reads...

***Acts 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.***

***...noised abroad...***

The disciples were meeting in this house as the ecclesia – the called out ones – the seed of the church.

Whatever it was that drew this crowd toward that house – whether it be the sound like a wind or the sound of the disciples speaking – the fact is that there was something going on there that attracted a crowd.

Word traveled rapidly through the city that something was happening at this church. The Holy Spirit moved among God's people and it attracted a crowd who came because they were curious.

That is what should happen after the Holy Spirit has come upon the church. We should pray that the Holy Spirit will cause something to happen at DaySpring that is so great, people will come just to see what is happening.

That is part of the motivation behind things like High Attendance days and other special events we have here. Everything we plan should have as its primary focus the worship of God and the attraction of those who need to know Christ.

The verse goes on to say that the people...

***...were confounded (confused), because that every man heard them speak in his own language.***

We must remember that we are part of the family of God. That means that we are purposefully designed by God to give Him worship and glory.

Yet we are also called to tell others the good news in a way that they will understand. While the end of all that we do is not to meet the needs of those who come to DaySpring, meeting their needs is certainly a means to the end of sharing the Gospel with them.

We need to be conscious of those who visit and what their needs are, both physically and spiritually, and do our best to help meet those needs whenever possible.

This crowd who attended church that day heard these disciples speaking their language.

### **Verses 12-13 – Reactions**

After the crowd got over its initial confusion and amazement and awe of what was happening at the house of the disciples, there were two reactions – doubt and derision.

#### **1. Doubt, v. 12**

***So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"***



Here we find a group of people who were perplexed and mystified by everything that was going on around them.

These people asked, "What does all of this mean? Where is all of this leading? I want to understand more about what is happening here."

This is the first step in their conversion and, as soon as Peter finished preaching or maybe even while he was preaching, many of these were prepared to make a decision because their minds and their hearts were opened to understand.

## 2. Derision, v. 13

*Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."*

Here is a group who mocked or derided the entire affair. They turned up their noses and sneered or made jokes about what they were witnessing, even though those who were speaking were doing so on the behalf of the listeners.

They did what many people are guilty of today. They refused to listen to the Gospel message or to attend church because of what they have seen happen at church or from what they have heard others say goes on at church.

But their expressed reason for rejecting what they heard from the disciples proved their own absurdity. According to what they said in their mocking, they believed an excess of strong drink can teach a man a foreign language.

If that were true, based on my college experience, I should be speaking French as well as Charles de Gaulle.

So they did what many people do when understanding escapes them or arguments fail them – they retreated into name calling. These guys are just a bunch of drunks.

It isn't the first time someone used a derogatory term to refer to God's people and it was certainly not the last. History is filled with names of groups whose titles were once used in derision – Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, and Christian.

Doubt and derision are two reactions that we can expect from those who do not understand the love of God. This is normal.

We must stand firm in our faith while we temper our response to such reactions. It is our response that can make a difference in their lives, as we will see next week in Peter's sermon to the crowd.

## Lesson 6 Proclamation

### Acts 2.14-41

#### I. Introduction **verse 14**

##### A. But Peter...

There is a point of contrast between the tumult and riotous nature of those who responded to the sound like a mighty rushing wind who came running to see what was going on and became confused and mystified – and humored – when they heard the disciples speaking in languages that each could understand, and the calm, controlled demeanor of Peter as he commanded their attention.

##### B. Stood up

1. Meaning is “to stand, stand by; immovable; firm; ready and prepared; steadfast.”
2. He was firm in his conviction and prepared to defend the behavior of his companions.
3. He stood with the eleven. The opposite of “stood” is “fell down.” Since none of them were falling down, it is obvious they were not drunk.
4. It may be that as Peter preached, the eleven translated the message so that all could understand.

##### C. Spoke up

1. Shouted above the tumult.
2. He needed to get the attention of those who doubted and those who were busy demeaning what they saw.

##### D. Spoke out

1. He “**said unto them**.” The word here refers, not to ordinary everyday speech, but to a dignified, elevated discourse.
2. It is the same word used in verse 4, “they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them *utterance*.” They did not speak in words that could not be understood.
3. They spoke, as did Peter in this sermon, with “deliberate, understandable words energized directly by the Holy Spirit.” (Z)

#### II. Explanation **verses 15-21**

##### A. Target audience

1. Scoffers
2. Seekers
3. Sinners

##### B. Text, **Joel 2.28-32**

###### 1. Answer to Scoffers

- a. Could not be drunk; only third hour (900 AM). Would not make sense today.
- b. Quoted from Joel 2.28-32 as evidence.

- 1) Here is evidence that, when the Holy Spirit of God enters the picture and becomes actively involved in people's lives, there are "extraordinary phenomena" that accompany Him.
- 2) Events were in two categories
  - a) Prophecy, seeing visions, dreaming dreams
  - b) Terrific events taking place in nature: blood and fire, pillars of smoke, the sun to darkness, moon into blood.
- 3) So there is no reason to make fun of these people who are responding exactly as God said they would.

The utterances of these simple Galileans and their behavior that seemed so erratic and out of place were not unusual happenings when God is moving among His people.

- 4) Though the Bible does not tell us so directly, maybe what the disciples were saying were prophecies and the expressions of visions.

## 2. Answer to Seekers

- a. Some among the crowd asked, "What does all of this mean?"
- b. Notice that, while Peter quoted from Joel, he did not get it exactly right. He added some words, changed some words, and left others out. Not errors, but explanations and commentary.
  - 1) Changed the word "afterward" to "in the last days."
  - 2) Added "saith God."
  - 3) **V. 18**, added "and they shall prophesy."
  - 4) Used "saved" instead of "delivered."
- c. Peter quoted from Joel 2 without any explanation other than to say that these words were actually from God through Joel.
 

Inspiration was taken for granted without any attempt at justifying the concept. What Joel said is what God said.
- d. I will pour out my Spirit – "It conveys also the idea of communicating largely, or freely, as water is poured freely from a fountain. Titus 3:5,6, "The renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly."
- e. Peter's purpose in the quote seemed to be to press upon the listener's the urgency of the hour. God had poured out His Spirit, marking the beginning of "the age of fulfillment."
- f. There was certainly much to be understood, e.g. the physical features of Joel's prophecy for which Peter made no attempt to explain, but this was the beginning of the end – of the last days.
- g. The Messianic Age – the Church Age – will end in the physical return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom on the earth.
- h. In fact, this entire part of the message was prophetic.
  - 1) Began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (the first aspect of Joel's prophecy)
  - 2) It ends with events that will not take place until after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal is opened in Rev. 6.12.

### 3. Address to Sinners

- a. Peter ended this first part of his sermon, the **Explanation**, with the last verse from Joel. **Verse 21**
- b. Joel's prophecy dealt with a time of judgment and a demonstration of the wrath of God, so his use of this verse was more about preservation than about salvation.
- c. In the context of Peter's message, the same thing can be said about his use of this verse in Acts 2.21. The end times began on the day of Pentecost. God was at work now, building His church. Once that task is completed, God will wrap things up with the return of Christ, the deliverance of the Church, and God's wrath on those who have rejected Christ as Lord.

The only means of preservation from God's wrath is through salvation promised to "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord."

**Romans 5:9** *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

## III. Proclamation **verses 22-36**

### A. Target audience (cf. **Acts 1.8**)

1. **Verse 14** Ye men of Judea, all ye that dwell at Jerusalem
2. **Verse 22** Ye men of Israel
3. **Verse 29** Men and brethren

### B. Teaching concerning Christ

Peter called had shouted for them to "hearken to my words" in v. 14. Now, in v. 22, he calls for them to pay attention by calling out "hear these words."

Then he preached unto them Jesus – the focal point of the message of salvation and the final revelation of God to man.

#### 1. Approved by God **verse 22**

- a. This Jesus of Nazareth, for whom you had so little respect, is in fact the Messiah.
- b. God proved this to you by performing miracles, wonders, and signs.
- c. He did this in your midst. With your own eyes and ears you witnessed Jesus do things that, before you knew Him, you have attributed only to God.
- d. Here is the evidence to support His claim to the Messiahship.

#### 2. Appointed by God **verse 23**

- a. Jesus was delivered "*by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*"
- b. It was important for these Jews to understand that what happened to Jesus was not the consequence of random events in history or subject to the will and whims of man, but were determined in eternity past by the counsel or intentional plan and purpose of God.
- c. The words **determinate counsel** refer to intention and purpose and a plan. The death of Jesus was determined by God before it happened. He was not compelled to do it, but by His own determination decided on the time, the place, and the manner of Jesus' death.

cf. **1 Peter 1.18-20**

And the counsel of God cannot be changed – it is immutable (**Heb. 6.17**).

- d. The word **foreknowledge**, in simplest terms, means knowledge had ahead of time.

Yet in light of the omniscience of God, such knowledge cannot be contingent, or dependent on circumstances. The word makes reference to events that are certain because they were determined beforehand by the counsel of God.

Such events are not the result merely of man's will, but of "will directed by a wise foreknowledge of what would be best." (Alfred Barnes)

**Isaiah 46:9-10 I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:**

### 3. Resurrected by God **verse 24**

- God approved of Jesus as the Messiah, He appointed Him to this position before the foundation of the world, and finally, He resurrected Jesus from the dead.
- "It was not possible that he should be held by it" is a statement of deity.
- Jesus may have been a man, living in flesh as do all men and tempted as all men are yet without sin, and as man, could experience the pain of death.

But God cannot die and was thus resurrected from the grave.

### C. Text, **Psalm 16.8-11 verses 25-28, 31, 2 Sam. 23.2, Ps. 132.11 verse 30, Ps. 118.16 verse 33, Ps. 110.1 verse 34-35**

In the next 12 verses, Peter speaks directly to the Jewish characteristic of his congregation.

He continues to quote from OT in several places in order to make his point that King David had written many prophecies concerning the Messiah and that these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus whom they crucified.

- Peter** makes the analogy between David's prediction and its fulfillment in Jesus and the events witnessed by the listeners.

In **verse 25b**, Peter quotes David as saying, **"I foresaw the Lord before my face."** (**Ps. 16.8a**)

**Acts 2.32**, Peter says that we have seen the risen Lord stand before us. We are eye-witnesses to this fact.

In **verse 25c**, Peter quotes David as saying, **"He is on my right hand."**

**Acts 2.33a**, Peter says that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God.

(**Ps. 16.8b**)

In **verse 25d**, Peter quotes David as saying, **"I shall not be moved."**

**Acts 2.33b**, Peter says we have received the promised Holy Spirit. Here we stand in His strength and authority.

(**Ps. 16.8c**)

In **verse 26**, Peter quotes David, **"My heart rejoiced, my tongue was glad."** (to exult, to leap for joy, to be ecstatic) (**Ps. 16.9**)

**Acts 2.33c**, Peter says that God has shed forth (poured out) His Spirit on us and yes, we were filled with joy and our tongues were loosed by the experience, as you both saw and heard.

In **Psalm 16.9**, David said, "My heart is glad, my glory (soul) rejoiceth, my flesh rests in hope."

*In verse 26, Peter said, “My heart rejoiceth, my tongue was glad, my flesh rests in hope.”*

*Once again, Peter did not quote David exactly, but the sentiment of the message is the same. The word “glad” means “to exult, to leap for joy, to be ecstatic.”*

*Peter says that Jesus fulfilled His promise of the Holy Spirit, He has filled the hearts of the disciples, and their tongues are loosed as a result.*

*It’s what happens to those who surrender themselves to the lordship of Christ and to the control of the Holy Spirit.*

*In verse 28, Peter says, “You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” (ESV)*

## 2. Patriarch **verse 29**

- a. There is historical significance in quoting from David – He is their patriarch.
  - 1) The king from whom all other kings will forever be chosen to rule Israel
  - 2) Founder of the nation as a power among nations
- b. David could not have been referring to himself in these verses, because, as everyone knew who was standing there that day, David had died and was buried and his grave was nearby to prove it.
- c. **“dead and buried and his grave is with us unto this day.”**

## 3. Prophet **verse 30**

- a. Spiritual significance – David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (**2 Sam. 23.2**), giving him the credentials of a prophet
- b. God had spoken to him concerning the promise that the Messiah would come from his descendants. (**Psalms 132.11**)
- c. God had also spoken through him in **Psalms 16.10**.
- d. Jesus promised that, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will remind you of the things that I have taught you.

Now, Peter recalls that earlier in Jesus’ ministry, (**Mark 12.36**), Jesus quoted **Psalms 110.1** and applied it to Himself, verifying that David was not only a king, but also a prophet.

- e. In **Luke 24.44**, Jesus said that every prophecy that was written concerning Him “in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

## 4. Predicted **verse 31** **“seeing this before”**

- a. **Psalms 110.1**
- b. As a prophet, God allowed David to understand that the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead, which means He would have to suffer death – something the Jews could not understand.

## 5. Proof **verse 34-35**

- a. You know that David did not ascend into heaven, therefore the Lord he is referring to in this text (**Psalms 16**) must be Jesus, the Christ.
- b. The person chosen to be king was not fully the king until he had gone through the ceremonies and the coronation that marked his position and authority.

- c. David predicted and the events of the last few weeks had proven that Jesus was indeed the Christ, that He is the One who is seated at the right hand of the Father, and that there was judgment awaiting those who rejected Him as well as salvation and deliverance for those who declared His lordship.
- d. With this preponderance of evidence, Peter declares in **verse 36** that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ – He met every requirement that Scripture had set forth as necessary to be recognized as the Messiah.

#### IV. Accusation

Peter, along with the other disciples, has been emboldened by the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Once afraid of a lowly servant maiden to the point that he denied even knowing Jesus, He now stands boldly before this throng of Jews to declare that they are guilty.

##### 1. Verse 23

- a. The first part of this verse spoke of the determinate counsel of God – that the crucifixion of Jesus was no happenstance of history, but was decided before the world was ever created.
- b. Now we see the second aspect of this verse as a clear indictment by God against those guilty of carrying out this plan: ***You have taken (Jesus), and by wicked hands (referring to the Romans) have crucified and slain (him).***
- c. Here, once again, as we have seen in the lessons of Joseph and Habakkuk, the two elements of life's workings – a paradox that seems to be just beyond the horizon of full comprehension – how the predetermined plan of God is the driving power and the required motivation in all that happens in the affairs of men, yet all of these things come to fruition by men expressing their own human freedom in decision-making.
- d. God doesn't need man to carry out His plans in the world. He could achieve them with just a spoken word. And there are times He has acted just so. But one thing that is certain is that God does use men to accomplish His mission – He works through His creation to achieve His plans.
- e. When any man gets saved, it is the miraculous, supernatural power of God at work in his life. Yet it will come to pass only in response to the Word of God being shared in verbal or written form by one man to another. (**Romans 10.14-17**)
- f. Here in this verse is an example of how the freewill decisions of man fulfill the predetermined counsel of God. Yet those decisions are subject to the judgment of God and He will punish and reward accordingly.

##### 2. Verse 36

- a. Peter closes the **Proclamation** aspect of his sermon with a second accusation.
- b. Following David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, the prophet Nathan (**2 Sam. 12.7**) stood in the presence of the king. The Bible doesn't say so, but I believe Nathan boldly pointed his finger at David and clearly expressed David's guilt in the matter by saying to David, "Thou are the man."

And Nathan's boldness inspired the desired response in David.

David could have had Nathan killed on the spot, but he reacted as God intended by repenting and confessing his sin.

God had the right to kill David, but in response to his repentance, God spared his life, though there were serious consequences for his actions.

- c. Now, Peter, standing boldly (v. 14) before those who crucified the Lord Jesus, declared them guilty. God had declared Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, and they had crucified Him.

## V. Invitation **Verses 37-39**

Peter's message, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had its intended response.

### A. Plea (v. 37)

1. Warned of the impending wrath of God on those who reject His Son, some of those who listened got the message and asked a second question. Their first question was "What does all of this mean?"
2. Now they are asking, "What shall we do?"

### B. Process (v. 38)

Peter had already made one invitation to call upon the Lord for salvation. Now he makes a second appeal for them to respond to this call through...

1. Repentance & baptism (the response of man to God's call)
2. For the remission of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit (God's response to man's obedience)

### C. Promise (v. 39)

1. This is the beginning of God's construction plan for the church. He laid the foundation in the lives of the Apostles and empowered them to carry the message to those who stood before them.
2. Now, God extends the building to include these men, their children, and "all that afar off" – a prophecy of the inclusion of Gentiles and all people – "as many as the Lord, our God, shall call."

## VI. Reaction **Verse 40-41**

- A. Peter continued to speak to the crowd, possibly answering more questions, until he closed the session with one final appeal: **"Save yourselves from this untoward (*skolios: crooked, perverse, wicked*) generation."** (Generation: age or period of time, typically 30-33 years. In other words, now is the time to start over with a clean slate.)
- B. And around 3000 people were baptized and added to the church.



## Lesson 7 Formation

### Acts 2.42-47

**Acts 2:42** *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

- **continued steadfastly – Focused on Commitment**

Single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action; devoted; faithful

Persevered, adhered to

Used in 1.14 to point out their commitment to prayer

Used in 6.4 to show the Apostles' commitment to prayer and the ministry of the word

The point is that they came, they joined, and they did not leave or forsake their commitment to the fellowship of believers. There is no record of anyone leaving because they got their feelings hurt or because they did not agree with the Apostles' teaching.

- **in the apostles' doctrine – Focused on Commission**

"Doctrine" here does not refer to a formalized, technical, abstract collection of biblical content, but simply to teaching.

Extensive – all that Jesus said and did

Intensive – Oral, no written record

Taught the words of Jesus and the works of Jesus – ministry, miracles, passion, resurrection – and how all of these things related to Israel and to God's plan of redemption.

- **and fellowship – Focused on Community**

Something set these believers apart from the other Jews – *koinonia*.

Occurs 20 times in the Bible. *Koinonia*'s primary meaning is "to hold something in common."

A key aspect of the Christian life. Believers in Christ are to come together in love, faith, and encouragement. That is the essence of *koinonia*.

**Philippians 2:1-2** *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

*Koinonia* is being in agreement with one another, being united in purpose, and serving alongside each other.

There's was a common faith – a hope of heaven, a hatred of sin, a habit of unity in assembly and in prayer.

Our *koinonia* with each other is based on our common *koinonia* with Jesus Christ. It is impossible for someone to be in full fellowship with Christ and fail to be in fellowship with other Christians and church members.

**1 Cor. 1:9** *God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**1 John 1:6-7** *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

If we are saved, two things will be certain to follow without doubt: fellowship with other saints and forgiveness of sin. You cannot have salvation and not have fellowship any more than you can have salvation and not have forgiveness of sin. Fellowship is not a requirement of the saved, but the fruit of salvation as is forgiveness.

A powerful example of what koinonia should look like can be found in a study of the phrase “one another” in the Bible. It is used 39 times in the NT and carries with it the meaning of reciprocation between two things that are alike.

- ***in the breaking of bread – Focused on Communion***

Could refer to communion and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper or it could refer to common meals shared in fellowship with each other.

**Luke 21.19** Jesus broke bread at the last supper.

**Luke 24.30** Jesus broke bread at a regular meal.

Placement in a list of spiritually related items makes us think that it probably refers to the breaking of bread in ceremony – the remembrance of the One who made all of this possible – Christ. They were continually reminding themselves and each other of the power behind their privilege to be part of the family of God.

May have been a custom at the end of a meal or a feast of some kind. It began as a form of worship, but the meaning seems to have become lost in tradition until Paul had to come down hard on the Corinthians for making the feast an embarrassing testimony to their gluttony and self-centeredness.

For the first church, the members knew little of “church” in the sense of an organized body and sought only to know more about Christ, which they learned through the teaching of the apostles.

It was His grace and sacrifice and salvation that they all shared in common and they did not “forsake the assembling of themselves together.”

And when they did come together, they “broke bread” – the symbol of which is to remind them and us of the presence of Christ in their hearts as well as in the assembly.

- ***and in prayers – Focused on Communication***

At the beginning, these were probably recitations of formal prayers learned from childhood in the Jewish tradition. Again, it is important to remember that the church has not seen itself as something separate from Israel.

Whatever the form their prayers took, the important thing is that they recognized that there could be no church – no fellowship of believers united in common purpose and praise – that was not bathed in prayer.

At the beginning of the verse, there was a lot of listening going on – at the end, there was a lot of talking. But this talk was directed, not at each other or about one another, but toward God who controls heaven and earth as well as the destiny of souls and His church.

**Acts 2:43** *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

- **Fear**

“Every soul” seems to indicate that the commitment of those in the fellowship had a direct bearing on the attitude of those in the community who were not part of the fellowship.

The sense of the word “came” is that this awe and fear “kept on coming.” In other words, every day brought new testimonies of how God was working in the lives of this assembly of believers.

The multitude who had so recently poked fun at the first disciples and reviled these “early morning drunks” now stood in awe and reverence, subdued and silenced by the change that they witnessed in the lives of those who believed.

- **Fascination**

Here were seemingly ordinary men – previously fishermen and tax collectors and rebels – all performing similar wonders and signs that these same people had seen performed by Jesus.

**Ada Habershon** (*from England, 19<sup>th</sup> Century; to US to work w/ Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey; wrote about 200 hymns, but known “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.”*)

God’s reasons for working miracles:

- He had lessons to impart which could not otherwise be taught.
- He had purposes to fulfil which could not otherwise be accomplished.
- He had revelations to make which could not otherwise be made clear.

Sometimes He worked to prove His omnipotence, His omniscience, His omnipresence; at other times He wished to reveal that He Himself was working.

No miracle was worked and no record was given without a definite purpose....But there was a reason for the working of the miracles of the ministry which surpassed all others. The Lord had come to reveal a God of infinite love and compassion....The miracles recorded in the Gospels were not mere exhibitions of power – they were revelations of grace.

Here is God, affirming His word and confirming His lordship and approving of these who made up the early church – the body of Christ now in a form that could penetrate the darkness all the way to the ends of the earth.

**Acts 2:44 *And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.***

The believers experienced and practiced community not communism.

- **Community in profession ...all the believers** – The early church was made up of believers – those who knew Christ as Savior. These were Jews who had come to realize the fulfillment of all of the OT in the person of Jesus, the Christ. The scoffers were all gone – at least for the time being – and the church was in one accord – at least for the time being.
- **Community in passion ...met together in one place** – They did not all live together in a common place – there were too many for that – but they shared a common passion. They were unified in purpose, in praise, and in prayer, which caused them to have a strong desire to meet in one place to share the experience of knowing and living Christ.

It’s especially important that we read the first part of that verse again...

**...all the believers met together in one place...** They realized that spiritual growth of the Christian requires fellowship of the entire body **together** and in **one place**. They did not believe that they could worship equally as well by themselves fishing down by the Jordan River.

Verse 46 says that they met every day in the Temple. Could it be that the one thing that convinced the nay-sayers to become quiet in their criticism and to wonder in awe of the

transformation of these believers was the faithfulness in attendance of those who professed Christ as Savior?

- **Community in practice ...and shared everything they had** – There was no demand on any member to divest themselves of all property, but there was a desire in their hearts – a willingness to contribute everything possible to the welfare of those within the fellowship who could not care for themselves or who struggled financially.

**Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47a Praising God, and having favor with all the people.**

- **Community in purpose ...continuing daily with one accord in the temple...**

All of the converts to date were either Jews or proselytes.

They were still Jews, but they were Christians. They were Christians, but they were still Jews. They still met in the Temple on a daily basis and practiced Jewish customs, beliefs, and prayers.

Jerusalem was still their city; the Temple was still their sanctuary; the Law was still their Law.

They were Hebrews, but they have finally gotten things right concerning the Messiah. They have seen the fulfillment of all that Israel had hoped for.

There was no plan at this point to break with the Jews

So, they continued to meet in the place that, for them, had always represented the presence of God and holiness – the Temple.

- **Community in partaking ...breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart...**

They met daily in the Temple – at least at this point in time. Yet a singular feature of their fellowship was that they also frequented one another's homes and while it says they broke bread together, the sense here is that they shared meals together more than shared communion in a spiritual sense.

And they did so with "singleness of heart." The most common translation of this phrase in more contemporary translations is "simplicity" or "with generosity."

The word is a compound word. The "a" at the beginning means "not" or "without."

The second part of the word refers to a stone that causes one to stubb their toe.

So in combination, the word signifies a smooth, plain land without any rocks that mar the surface or soil so that the pathway is easy to walk.

- **Community in praise 47a Praising God...**

Structurally, the first part of verse 47 is connected more to verse 46.

They were a community of praise – focused upward and inward (vertical).

They were aware that the salvation they had experienced was a deliverance from the captivity of sin and that the only reason they were justified in God's eyes was the direct result of grace.

- **Community in persistence 47a ...and having favor with all the people...**

Maybe a better word would be consistency – they were not hypocritical in their walk before the people of the world.

Not only was there a vertical focus evident in the church, but there was also a horizontal focus – outward toward the community.

The community may not have joined them, but their testimony in the community was of a people who loved their God and worshiped Him in unity. As a result, every translation says that the next phrase means that the church met with feelings of goodwill from all of the community.

But one commentator made a good point. When you read back over all of the verses in this set of verses, all of the verbs are active voice: *continuing, breaking bread, praying, believing, selling, parting, partaking, and praising.*

So why would this phrase suddenly jump to the passive voice – *having favor*?

In the Greek, the verb translated as “having” is actually a present participle in active voice, as are the other verbs I pointed out.

In addition, the word translated as “favor” in the KJV is the Greek word *charis*, which means “grace.”

So, putting all of that together, then an acceptable translation of that last phrase could be “...having charity toward all the people...”

A similar statement is made concerning Jesus in...

**Luke 2:52** *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

Yet here again, we need to study the context to get the full meaning of this verse. Remember that the 12-year-old Jesus had become separated from his parents, causing them much concern until they found him in the Temple.

When they confronted him about his behavior, remember his answer...

**Luke 2:49** *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*

And what was His Father's business? Sharing the Gospel with the world – telling the good news of salvation.

Could it be that the church found favor with the community was because after the church testified about the love and joy found in Christ to the community, then the community was able to witness the truth of that profession in the actions of the members towards one another?

**Acts 2:47b** *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

This is evidence of the above argument that the last phrase is more than just a statement of how much the community appreciated the church – it is a statement of the outward focus of the church than toward the community in an evangelistic way.

This last phrase is simply a statement of fact that the church continued to grow as new people were saved.

ESV – *And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

HCSB – *And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.*

Msg – *Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.*

NKJV – *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

There are two points to make here:

1. ***The Lord added to the church...***

Remember that Jesus told His disciples that, upon their profession of faith in Him as Lord, He would build His church. The only person who can build a church is Jesus. We do not have the power to save. We can only make the decision to be obedient to share our testimony with the world around us and trust God to build His church.

2. ***Those who were being saved...***

Those who were being saved were being added to the church. That means that those who were being saved recognized that their call was not just to salvation – to forgiveness of sin and rescue from hell – but to become part of the body of Christ by attaching themselves to the local body of believers.

Those who claim to know Christ as Lord will, by default, associate themselves with His church. How can anyone claim to be a Christian – a part of the body of Christ – and then not associate with the other cells?

New body cells become part of the human body – not spiritually, but physically – not because they make a decision to join the body, but because that is what defines them as human body cells. If they can live outside of the human body, then they must not be human cells.

The same thing is true of those who claim to be Christian and seldom or never darken the doors of a local church.

**So we come to the end of Acts 2.**

Here was God bringing into reality the power of Christ, the prophecy of Joel, and the preaching of Peter.

Joel's prophecy came at a time following one of the greatest economic catastrophes in all of the history of Israel and preceded one of the greatest political and historical tragedies the nation would ever know – destruction of the nation by Jerusalem and being carried off into captivity.

Little did Israel know that they were witnessing the repeat of history during these days. Joel had said, ***“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”***

Peter echoed that very same message in his timely sermon to the nation in Acts 2. The people were struggling under the heavy yoke of the Romans, but little did they realize that they were less than 30 years from total annihilation.

It should be the message of the church today. Our nation is in the midst of one of the worst economic and political challenges it has ever faced since the Civil War. Are these days just the precursors to God's wrath on this country and this world.

***“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***

That may sound like an all-inclusive, open-armed invitation. I believe it is more accurately a prophecy of how few will actually listen. The testimony of history is that most will ignore the warning. Even Jesus said, ***“The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”***

That does not excuse the church from its duty to share the Gospel with every person we meet. It is a reminder that ultimately, salvation is between each individual and the Creator.

## Lesson 8 Illustration

### Acts 3.1-11

There is a pattern in Luke's writing of the account of the founding of the church. His purpose is to confirm the miraculous nature of the birth of the church and to authenticate the ministry of the apostles in its founding.

In **Chapter 2**, we saw first the miracle of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Those affected by the miracle were so vocal in their response that they drew a large crowd of curious onlookers who marveled at the event and sought to understand it.

The Apostle Peter was led to take advantage of this opportunity and preached a Gospel message in which he explained the phenomenon the people had witnessed, attributing it to the power of God. He followed that with an exhortation of the word of God and an invitation to repentance. As a result, there were 3000 souls added to the church.

**Chapter 3** is a repeat of this pattern. It begins with the miraculous healing of a man who had been crippled since birth – for at least 40 years. Following his healing, the man celebrated in such a vocal and physical manner that he attracted a crowd of curious onlookers who marveled at what had happened – because they had known the man all of his life – and questioned the nature of what had just occurred.

Once again, Peter was led to take advantage of such a great opportunity to present a gospel message and a call for repentance. There was a mixed reaction which was the beginning of what would become a bloody persecution. Yet, at the same time, there was repentance as additional souls were added to the church, bringing the number of Christians to over 5000.

In the last lesson dealing with verses 42-47 of chapter 2, we saw...

- Apostle's teaching, signs, wonders
- Attention and attendance of the believers
- Awe of the Jews in the city

**Acts 3.1-11** is a vignette illustrating these events.

You've heard it said that a picture is worth a thousand words. As a good illustration brings a lesson to life, the miracle allows the listener or the learner to actually experience the reality of the story and "brings the reader into the picture."

This is another pattern that we see in the New Testament. In **Matthew's** gospel, chapters **5-7** detail Jesus' teaching to His disciples and a large audience concerning the kingdom and its affect on those who are called. Then, in Chapter 8, Matthew records the healing of the leper to illustrate the practical effects of the Gospel message in real life. There is a message followed by a miracle.

Now, in Acts 3, there is a miracle followed by a message.

**Acts 3:1** *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

The illustration begins with Peter and John going to the Temple together at about 300 PM for a time of prayer. It is significant that they missed – or skipped – the time of sacrifice.

It is also important to note that they were together. Jesus had instructed them to travel in pairs as they went about doing ministry (Mk. 6.7). The disciples took the instruction seriously and seemed to make a habit of it.

There are several occasions when we see Peter and John together.



- Mark 14.33 Jesus took them with James into the Garden of Gethsemane
- Luke 22.8 Preparation of the Passover
- Acts 8.14 Sent by the church at Jerusalem to investigate salvation coming to Samaria
- Gal. 2.9 Paul refers to Peter, John, and James as pillars of the church

For Peter and John – and probably for the other disciples – it was just an ordinary day in their lives. Going to the Temple was a routine – not that it wasn't an important part of their day. I am sure they were sincere in their attendance and in their daily prayers.

You might even ask, at this point, why Peter and John were still in Jerusalem. Jesus had told them to remain there until the Holy Spirit came, but now that He has, and since it has been so long since they had seen their own homes, you wonder why they did not return to Galilee.

Apparently, they had a sense of mission here in Jerusalem and did not feel at peace about going home yet. So they continued to live as the holy remnant of Israel – believing in and teaching about Jesus the Messiah and continuing to practice Jewish customs and forms of worship and to attend Jewish institutions.

Yet this day had nothing to mark it as a special day and this trip to the Temple was just an ordinary trip to pray. There was nothing to indicate to them that anything special was about to happen that would change the lives of thousands of people.

But, as one author said, "...the Holy Spirit is doing things in the eternal sphere that are expressed in normal daily activity." The Holy Spirit was prepared that day...

- To heal a crippled beggar
- To draw a crowd of curious spectators
- To lead Peter to preach a gospel message of repentance
- To add over 2000 new souls to the church

It was just an ordinary day.

Faith is a large part of this story. Faith is the evidence of things not yet seen (Heb. 11.1). The things that we see are of this world, but the things that we cannot see are eternal (2 Cor. 4.18). Yet we are called to walk by faith (Heb. 10.38; 2 Cor. 5.7).

One thing this means is that we are to go through the routine of our daily lives with the expectation that what we cannot see and cannot foresee may happen any moment. God is always at work, and He works through His people.

Walking by faith means that we live in daily expectation of God using us to carry out His work of grace in the lives of those with whom we come into contact.

God works through our walk of faith.

For the man who is about to be healed, it was also just an ordinary day.

Let's look closer at this man whose life was about to be dramatically and drastically changed.

- 1. Handicap**
  - 2. Healing**
  - 3. Hallelujahs**
-



## 1. Handicap (v. 2-3)

### 1.1 Crippled

The man had been crippled since birth, meaning that he could not walk, had never walked, and had no prospects that he would ever be able to walk. Walking was something that he observed in others, but seemed to have no idea that it applied to him. As a result, he depended on others to get him where he needed to be.

### 1.2 Carried

The Bible does not say who carried him, but whether family or friends, someone had this responsibility. And he had been coming here on a daily basis for most of his life. As far as those who knew the crippled beggar, he would always be in this same shape he had been in for forty years.

### 1.3 Confined

In other words, there was nothing that the lame man could do about his physical condition. He could work – begging was, for him, a career and a way of raising support. Yet he was trapped in this condition for life.

Remember that it is very likely that Luke used this miracle at this point in the narrative to illustrate the events that had occurred in Chapter 2. There are several parallels between this man and those who had earlier professed Christ as Lord.

The lame man had been **crippled** since birth – the same thing that is true of sinners. The lame man did not do anything to be lame except be born. He was not lame because he could not walk; he could not walk because he was lame. Men are sinners because they are **crippled** by the sin that controls their hearts and condemns them to the penalty of death.

As far as the lame man was concerned, his condition was hopeless. He was **confined** to his condition for the rest of his life. And that is the condition of a lost person. They are hopeless for redemption apart from a supernatural touch of the Savior. The major difference is that, for the sinner, the **confinement** extends into eternity.

The lame man got to the Temple because his friend or family **carried** him there. If sinful men are going to learn about Christ and call on Him as Lord, it will be because faithful people **carried** them to church or carried the gospel to them – whether across the street or around the world.

One thing that we might note about those who carried the crippled man: There is no evidence that they carried him to the Temple with the anticipation that he would find God, but that he would find gold. They had the right idea, but the wrong motivation.

So many times those who are suffering and hurting in life are promised that, if they just come to Jesus, He will take away all of that pain and discomfort when there is no promise that that is the case. Jesus came to give us eternal life. He came to give us life that is abundant – not the kind that is filled with earthly rewards, but with the kind that is so abundant that it naturally flows outward to others.

That does not mean to diminish the comforting nature of the character of God.

When the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment...

**Matt. 9:22 ...Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole.**

**2 Cor. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

Note, however, that this comfort does not rescue us from discomfort and tribulation, but gives us the peace that passes all understanding while in the midst of a bad situation.

The friends of the lame man brought him to church to beg – to meet his worldly needs. There is no indication they brought him there to find God.

Finally, notice that the man called out to Peter and John. His cry was for money – for benevolence. He was looking for support from those who attended the Temple so that he could continue in his current lifestyle. He had come to the right place, but he was expecting the wrong results.

How many people come to church or come to Christ looking for some relief from the pressures and the adversities of life, but they have no intention of changing their lifestyles.

Yet, let me call your attention to something else in this verse – a very small, but important word. Notice in verse two that those who carried the lame man to the Temple did so “daily.” They were faithful in their calling and eventually, on God’s timetable, the lame man received a greater gift of benevolence than anyone could have imagined.

The man had been begging at the Temple for probably most of his 40 years, which means that it is very likely that Jesus had passed through this same gate and heard this same man begging for alms, yet Jesus did not stop and heal him.

The only reason I can give for that is that it just wasn’t in God’s plans for this man’s healing to take place until now. When God heals or works any miracle it is because He has a purpose in it. And His primary purpose in doing anything He does is for His own glory.

When Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus, as far as the record goes, no other lives were directly impacted by it. When this lame man was healed, he began to express himself in joyful praise, drew a crowd, and the result was that thousands were saved.

That is a look at the crippled man’s handicap. He asked for a mere handout.

What he got was a miraculous healing.

## **2. Healing (v. 4-7)**

### **2.1 Peter listened.**

When the man called out for alms from Peter and John, they apparently heard him. As many times as they had been to the Temple – remember they went there daily – why had they not heard this man before? Or if they had, why had they not stopped before?

The reason goes back to God’s timing and our walking in faith.

On this particular day, apparently the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter and John and brought this man into their direct pathway by their hearing his call for help. Because they were walking by faith, they were aware of the voice of the Holy Spirit and responded to His leading as they turned aside to approach the lame man.

And through their faithfulness, God worked a miracle.

When God works a miracle, it is with a purpose. It may be for various reasons, but typically, miracles were God’s way of validating or authenticating a ministry. Here were two of the most prominent of the Apostles – probably easily recognized by most of the city – maybe even recognized by this man, since they came to the Temple every day – who claimed that Jesus was the Messiah and that they were His disciples.

Now here, in a most prominent place in the city, God works through these men to validate their claims and their ministry.

Peter and John listened to the Holy Spirit and heard the crippled man’s plea.

## 2.2 Peter looked. (v. 4, *fastening his eyes upon him, with John...*)

This is a word that is unique to the writings of Luke and Paul.

- After Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth and read out loud a portion from Isaiah...

***Luke 4:20 ...he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.***

- At the ascension in chapter 1 of Acts...

***Acts 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;***

- When the angel appeared to Cornelius...

***Acts 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.***

Its use here indicates that Peter is aware that the Holy Spirit is about to do something great and that he and John are to be His instruments.

Another point to make here is that Peter paid attention to the man. In other words, he did not look so much on the man's handicap as much as he dwelt on the man who sat before him. For Peter and John, this was personal – the way our relationships should be with those we seek to influence for Christ.

The crippled man was caught up in the moment and gazed back with a steady and expectant eye into the faces of Peter and John – yet even now his greatest hope was not for healing, but for a gift of money.

## 2.3 Peter let. (v. 6)

Peter let Christ work through him by the power of the Holy Spirit that indwelt him.

Peter was so in tune with the Spirit and with the situation that he understood the man's look, and so he answered in a way that the man could never have imagined.

### **Verse 6.**

Now here is a verse that we could camp out on for some time to come.

The man was looking for gold or silver, but neither Peter nor John had any money to give. What they did have was so much more valuable.

There is an interesting story which has come down from medieval times:

The great scholar, Thomas Aquinas, came to the City of Rome to pay his respects to the one who was then pope. In the course of his visit, the pope proudly showed him all the wonders of the papal palace, and took him to his treasury and showed him chests of silver and gold received from every part of the world. With something of a smile on his face he said, "You see, Thomas, we cannot say with Peter, 'Silver and gold have I none.'"

Looking the pope in the eyes, Thomas Aquinas fearlessly replied, "No, and neither can we say, 'In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'" Riches had come, but power had gone! Peter and the apostles had poverty and power.

Jesus empowered His disciples to minister and to heal and to cast out demons in His authority – the authority signified by His name.

**Mark 13:34** *It is like a man on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, assigned each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to be alert.*

**Luke 9:1** *Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.*

With the knowledge of the authority that Christ had given him, Peter spoke to the crippled man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

To the people of this age, a name did not just identify a person, but signified his being. The power of Jesus was released through Peter, and Peter wanted the crippled man to be aware of the fact that he (Peter) was not acting on his own authority, but that of Jesus.

Name – comprises the full revelation of the person

Jesus – makes reference to Jesus’ birth, his ministry, his passion, his death and burial – all of those things that made him human.

Christ – called attention to the fact that this was not just an ordinary man, but the exalted Son of God – the anointed One – the Messiah.

Nazareth – emphasized the fact that this was that same man that had been so despised by the world and by the Jewish leadership; the name by which Jesus had been referred to on the cross.

The healing came...

- through Peter – but by actuality, it came through Christ who lived in him in the form of the Holy Spirit.
- by faith – not the faith of the crippled man. All that he was looking for was help with his finances, not healing of his feet and legs. The faith here is that of Peter and John who knew the power of Christ.
- by divine grace at the will and the timing of God.

The miracle authenticated the ministry of the apostles while at the same time it demonstrated the mercy and the grace of God toward sinners.

## 2.4 Peter lifted.

Peter’s message to the blind man was “I have the power and the authority of the resurrected Jesus, your crucified Messiah, working through me to bring your healing. Now – walk!

Then, modeling what he had seen Jesus do on the occasion of the healing of Peter’s mother, reached down and took the man by the hand and lifted him up.

The healing was unexpected by the man, but it was instantaneous and resulted in extreme exultation.

We saw the man’s handicap and then his healing. Now let’s look at the hallelujah’s that followed.

## 3. Hallelujahs (v. 8-10)

### 3.1 Walking

One of the most remarkable features of this story is that the man had been crippled from birth. He didn’t forget to walk after becoming crippled – he had never learned to walk because he was crippled from his birth. Furthermore, as far as the story reveals, the man did nothing to merit the favor and mercy of God. I am certain there were other people begging near that same place, but God chose this man to heal.

Now, after 40 years of sitting, the man not only stood up and began walking, but he went leaping. He didn't have to go through some process of learning that he could walk. He didn't have to take a class on "What healed people should look like if they are truly healed." He just started leaping. A similar event took place when Paul healed a crippled man at Lystra. He immediately began leaping and walking.

Celebration is the natural response for anyone who has truly experienced the grace of God in their lives. And it is also a "striking fulfillment" of the prophecy of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 35.4** *Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.*

There is a close correlation between this man's condition as a cripple and the condition of a sinner. Just listen to the way the Bible describes a lost person:

- Dead (Eph. 2.1)
- Blind (2 Cor. 4.4)
- Deaf and mute (Mark 7.32-37)
- Leprous (Mark 1.40-42)
- Lame (Mark 4.1-12)

Just like healing, salvation is a miraculous miracle of God imparting life to a man that is dead. It is God demonstrating His mercy and grace when and on whom He chooses.

And when He acts – when He brings the dead heart to life – it will be obvious to everyone involved.

We think we have to convince people to "invite Jesus into their hearts" and then follow up immediately and effectively to make sure their decision sticks.

**2 Cor. 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

If we have to talk someone into believing they are saved, then they probably never experienced the life-giving grace of God. I don't believe anyone had to convince this man to get up and walk – even after never knowing how to walk before and without a single lesson.

Peter took him by the hand, lifted him up, and commanded him to start walking.

We feel we have to wait about a year after some serious evangelism training and lots of spiritual counseling before a new convert hears the Great Commission. We surely don't want to run them off by hitting them with the truth of the call of God on their lives too soon.

### 3.2 Worshiping

I think it very significant that the first place the man went after his healing was into the Temple. You wonder why he didn't tear out down the street to find his parents or his family and friends or the person who so faithfully carried him there every day to beg at the Temple gate.

But the Bible said that he attached himself to Peter and John and followed them into the Temple. You wonder if Peter and John had not continued into the Temple whether the man would have gone in either. But they did because they were faithful in attendance. And they led him to follow suit. In fact, verse 11 says that the man clung to Peter and John.

He did not praise them. All of his praise went to God, but it is certain that he recognized that God had used them in a miraculous way.

The man started out walking and leaping in verse 8. By the time he had entered the Temple in verse 9, the Bible says that he was only walking. But in every case he was praising God.

Those who experience the saving grace of God won't have to be convinced that they belong in the place of worship, and they won't have to be convinced that they ought to participate in the singing.

### 3.3 Witnessing

You might argue the point that the man never did any witnessing. But the Bible says that he went walking and leaping, and that the people saw him walking and leaping.

He may not have ever said a word to them, but he had not been mute. He had been a crippled. He was doing before the people something that they all knew he had never been able to do since birth

The Bible doesn't say that the people wondered what happened to him. It says "they were filled with wonder and amazement" at what they were witnessing. The Message says that they "rubbed their eyes, astonished, scarcely believing what they were seeing."

Wonder means they were dumbfounded and rendered immovable.

I want to read a definition of the word "amazed."

A throwing of the mind out of its normal state (like) that of a man who by some sudden emotion is transported as it were out of himself, so that in this rapt condition, although he is awake, his mind is drawn off from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on things divine that he sees nothing but the forms and images lying within, and thinks that he perceives with his bodily eyes and ears realities shown him by God.

There was such a significant change in this man's life. All who knew him were personally affected by the change that had taken place.

### Conclusion

The man in this story was lame, crippled, and was prevented from entering the Temple, not by any man, but by his own condition of birth. He needed healing. We have to imagine that he even desired healing. But his condition immobilized him and kept him from coming to Jesus – even had he known that Jesus was available.

So he sought for the joy available in material things. He came to the Temple seeking blessing, but thought of blessing only in terms of material comforts and possessions.

Yet the Temple (church?) could not help him. The goodness and benevolence of man could not help him. The kind of help he needed he did not even ask for. It was given to him by the grace of God quite apart from any desire of his own will.

***John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

**Addendum 1**

The crippled man had been carried to the Temple so that he might seek relief from the anxieties of life. He called out to anyone who would listen. He sat at the gate of the Temple with the hope that those who entered would respond to his need because of his expectation that, if they were entering the Temple, then certainly they would have a relationship with the God, and that he would benefit from their sense of mercy.

Though his motives were self-centered, he had at least come to a place of worship with the right expectation. He called out for help, and apparently the people responded with benevolence because he had been doing this for many years. Yet there is no record that anyone ever offered him healing.

I wonder if there is a message in this to the church about our attitude toward the world. When the world attends, do we offer them Jesus? Or a series of needs-based programs and activities that will satisfy their hunger for God-likeness through busyness?

What is evident from this story is that Peter and John had the ears of God.

It is significant to note that the crippled man did not choose either Christ or healing. God had chosen this particular man out of all the other beggars who most likely congregated around the gate to the Temple.

Peter and John responded to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and commanded the man to rise and walk. There was no discussion of his condition or whether he had within him any power to walk or enough faith for healing.

Their command to the crippled man was simply "Rise and walk."

Notice that the man immediately leaped up and began walking. He did not experience healing because he walked; because he was healed, he walked – without ever having had a single lesson in walking.

And this was immediately accompanied by worship – praising God – and witnessing – influencing others with the testimony of his own healing.

For the sinner, the command is "Repent and work."

We are commanded to repent for the remission of sin. Through the process of repentance we are saved. Yet the Bible goes on to say that we are saved unto good works.

Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

It is not the works that save us anymore than it was his walking that healed the crippled man. But he walked as a response to the direct command of Peter to rise. And the saved person will work as a direct result of his repentance.

And all of this is the miraculous work of God in election.



## **Addendum 2: Walk by Faith**

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11.1)

There is something very significant here that is so easy to overlook. Notice that faith is not the “things hoped for,” and it is not the things “not seen.”

Faith is not made up of what we hope for. Faith is the substance of what we hope for. In other words, faith is that which brings our hopes into living color and reveals them to our senses.

Faith is not made up of what we cannot see. Faith is the evidence that what we cannot see is real – is truth. Faith is substance – solid matter and observable phenomena that make visible those things that are yet invisible.

Faith is our observation of what has been and what is which leads us to act on the belief that what will be or what cannot yet be seen is truth.

Faith is not based on what we cannot see but on what we can see.

Faith in Christ means that we take the full measure of who He is, what He has done, of his ministry, his passion, his death and resurrection – all things that are either evidential (his deity) or observable (his ministry), and on that basis we trust in what is coming.

With this understanding, read again Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” It should now be more apparent than ever why the faith that leads to salvation does not find its source within us, but in Christ. He is the substance and the evidence – the solid ground upon which our salvation is founded and secured.

Thus a walk of faith is not a leap in the dark, but a walk in the light which reveals the future to us with the assurance of today.

The phrase “the just shall live by faith” is used three times in the NT (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 4:18; Gal. 3:11). In this usage, the word “by” denotes origin – the point from which an action or a motion proceeds. The meaning is that our eternal life finds its origin in the faith of Jesus Christ.

The phrase “walk by faith” is used only once in the NT (2 Cor. 5.7).

For most of us, the concept of walking by faith refers to our trusting God to take care of our every need as Jesus explained in Matthew 6. And it does have that meaning.

Yet there is another facet of walking by faith that we seldom think of and almost never apply.

Unlike the word “by” in the phrase “the just shall live by faith,” which refers to origin, the word “by” in 2 Cor. 5.7 denotes the channel of an act. It *can* refer to the means or the method by which something happens, but typically is translated in the NT as “through,” meaning “by reason of,” “on account of,” or “for this reason.”

The meaning of the phrase is that faith is the reason for our everyday, walking-around life. We walk “on account of” or “for the reason of” our faith.

In practical terms, walking by faith is more than simply trusting God to care for our every need. It is walking around – “going” is the term Jesus used in the Great Commission – with the idea in mind that at any given moment, God may use you or me to carry out some work related to the kingdom.

“Walk by faith” means that we are to go through the routine of our daily lives with the expectation that what we cannot see and what we cannot foresee may happen at any moment. God is always at work, and He works through His people. Walking by faith means that we live in daily expectation of God using us to carry out His work of grace in the lives of those with whom we come into contact.

God works through our walk of faith.



## Lesson 9 Proclamation #2

### Acts 3.12 – 4.4

In its organization and content, **Acts 3** is very much like **Acts 2**:

- There is first a miracle
- which draws a crowd,
- followed by a sermon and an invitation, and
- a great response from those in the congregation.

#### I. Miracle

Last week, we looked at the miracle in **Acts 3.1-11**.

##### A. Place

Outside the Temple at the gate known as Beautiful

##### B. Picture

1. Peter and John going to the Temple as they did every day at the hour of prayer
2. Man at the gate, crippled since birth, begging for a living

##### C. Power

Peter, responding to the Holy Spirit, answers the man's call for alms by giving him healing "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

##### D. Purpose

1. God used miracles to validate or authenticate a ministry. The fact that Peter and John and the other apostles performed miracles similar to those of Jesus gave evidence that they were His ambassadors and were authorized by Christ in their ministry of the Gospel.
2. Prophecy plays a big part in both of the sermons of Peter.
  - a. In the first sermon, Peter quoted from the OT writings of David and Joel as evidence for the fact that Jesus was the Messiah.
  - b. In the second sermon, in Chapter 3, he will quote from Deuteronomy and 2 Samuel, once again giving evidence that the ministry of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies concerning the Messiah.
3. The fact that the lame man was healed also touches on the fulfillment of prophecy.
  - a. The healing of the lame man in Acts 3 is very similar to miracles performed by Jesus (Matt. 21.14) following the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and later by Paul (Acts 14) during his first missionary journey.
  - b. When John the Baptist sent a messenger to Jesus asking if He were truly the Messiah, Jesus told the messengers to tell John, **"The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."** (Matt. 11.5)
  - c. These things had been prophesied very specifically by the Prophet Isaiah. He wrote that, when the Messiah has come, **"...the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer..."** (Isaiah 35.5-6)

## E. Product

1. Praising – Walking, leaping, praising God
2. People – **v. 11** *“All the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering.”*
3. Preparation – The stage is set.

## II. Message

### A. Introduction – v. 11-12

#### **John 9.1-3**

**John 9:3** *Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”*

The phrase “be made manifest” is a synonym of the word apocalypse, or revelation.

But there is a slight difference that will help to understand what Jesus was saying here and what Peter says in **v. 13**.

The word “apocalypse” means revelation – to reveal or, more literally, to remove a lid; to disclose. In a spiritual sense, it denotes an act of divine revelation – something that is true about God.

The word “manifest” means to display or to exhibit.

It’s as if you had discovered a secret treasure hidden in a cave near your home. Discovering the treasure and bringing it to light is revelation. Putting the treasure on display in the local museum would be to make it manifest.

Revelation refers more to the thing that is discovered. Manifest refers more to the ones to whom the manifestation is made.

Jesus explained that this man had been born blind many years before so that on this particular day, God could heal him and, in the process, allow the people to see God’s power and glory on display.

God healed the blind man to glorify Himself and to authenticate the authority of Christ’s ministry.

Now, in Acts 3, Peter, who certainly witnessed Jesus’ healing of the blind man, makes a very similar statement in his...

### B. Exhortation – v. 13-18

#### 1. Explanation – v. 13

- a. Peter makes it very clear that he did not heal the crippled man in his own power and authority. In verse 13, in a partial quote of **Ex. 3.6**, Peter says that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob healed this man for the distinct purpose of glorifying the Son.
- b. God healed the lame man to glorify Christ and to authenticate the authority of the Apostles and their ministry.
- c. References to Jesus

#### 1) Son **v. 13**

In every other version, this word is translated “servant,” here and in v. 26.

**Matt. 12:18** *Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.*

**Isaiah 42:1** *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

**Isaiah 49:6** *And he said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

2) Holy One v. 14

**Psalms 16:10** *You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

In his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter demonstrated how this verse applied directly to the Messiah.

Jesus is recognized as the Holy One even by demons.

**Luke 4:33** *Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, 34 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!"*

**Luke 1:35** *And the angel answered and said to her (Mary), "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*

3) Just v. 14

*Antonomasia: 1) The substitution of a title or epithet for a proper name, as in calling a sovereign "Your Majesty." 2) The substitution of a personal name for a common noun to designate a member of a group or class, as in calling a traitor a "Benedict Arnold."*

The word is more than an adjective – it is capitalized as a name. Jesus is the very personification of what it means to be just – to be innocent, free of crime, who stands upright when measured against the Law.

Those who sought to destroy Jesus accused Him of blasphemy. There were no witnesses to prove His guilt, yet the Sanhedrin found Him guilty. The problem for them was that this charge carried no weight with Pilate.

So they accused Him of sedition, yet neither Pilate nor Herod could find enough evidence to condemn Him. Still, they insisted on His crucifixion.

Those who stood listening to the sermon of Peter knew all of this history, because for most of them, the scenes were still fresh in their memories.

4) Prince of life v. 15

The word "prince" is a reference to a military leader.

**Rev. 1:5** *Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.*

**Heb. 2:10** *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

The word “prince” also refers to the cause or the author of something – in this case, the cause or the author of life.

**Heb. 12:2** *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*

Peter wanted to make it clear to all who were listening that the One who gets the glory for all that we have and all that we are is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom “you by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (2.23)

It’s right about here that Peter gets very personal in his sermon.

## 2. Accusation – v. 13-15

- a. Delivered Him (*Notice how God alliterated Peter’s sermon*)

What Judas Iscariot had done.

- b. Denied Him (even when Pilate was determined to let Him go)

What Peter himself had done.

- c. Desired Him not (Desired a murderer)

What the Jewish leadership led the masses to do – to demand the taker of life over the Giver of life.

- d. Destroyed Him (literally, deprived of life or killed)

What no man could ever do.

They tried to destroy Him, but v. 15 ***“...God has raised (Him) from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”***

**Acts 3:16** *And his name – by faith in his name – has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

This verse does not translate very well into English. According to some commentators, it does not express the thought very well, even in Greek.

The Hebrews were very careful never to express audibly the name of God. It was represented in writing by the *tetragrammaton*, YHWH. They would use the word Adonai, or Lord, in place of the name of God because it was so sacred to them.

A combination of the tetragrammaton and the vowels from the word adonai were used to create an artificial name for God – Jehovah.

Another term the Jews used to avoid saying YHWH, since they did not want to say His name, was simply to refer to God as “the Name.”

That is the idea that Peter seemed to be trying to convey here.

“The Name through faith in The Name has made this man healed. And the faith itself which healed him came through that same Jesus.”

Once again, Peter is not making reference to the actual name “Jesus,” but to the authority and the power represented by the name.

And the faith that is mentioned is that of Peter and John, not of the lame man, as we mentioned last week.

All of this explanation is to make the point that the subject of this healing is not the man who was healed or those who did the healing, but Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Notice that Peter closed this sentence with “*in the presence of you all*” – God worked this miracle in front of all of you who are guilty of crucifying the Messiah.

All in all, Peter has preached hard to this crowd that had assembled in the Temple after the healing of the lame man. Though their crime is great, Peter demonstrates the love that lives in the heart of Christian by the words in the next verse.

### 3. Mitigation – v. 17-18

Peter’s purpose in preaching the way he did was not for the purpose of condemnation but conviction.

The people before him were not destined for hell because they had participated in the death of Jesus. All men are condemned to the penalty of death and eternal separation from God by their DNA inherited from Adam. The fact that we continue to practice sin even after coming to the age of understanding is evidence of the justice of God’s sentence.

Peter is bringing them to the conviction – to the understanding that they denied the only source of rescue from the condemnation of sin.

Now he speaks with compassion. “What are we going to do about your sin?”

Notice that he refers to these Jewish listeners as “brethren.” Peter is aware that his salvation is by God’s design – a gift he would not have sought and could not have attained except for the grace of God.

He, too, denied Christ and, by his denial, delivered Jesus to crucifixion.

There is no reproach in his message. There is only a call to repentance.

Peter knew that the decision they made to cry out for the crucifixion of Jesus was made in ignorance.

***1 Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***

***1 Tim. 1:13 I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.***

Peter also knew that their ignorance did not excuse their guilt. They put a man to death whom they knew could not be proven guilty, but they did not put Jesus to death because they knew He was the Messiah.

Although there seems to have been an overwhelming amount of information available to the Jews that would make it clear to them that Jesus was who He claimed to be, it is obvious they did not believe He was the Messiah.

He just did not look like or act like the person they had imagined for all the preceding centuries and generations.

Peter taught that God had glorified His servant, Jesus. For the Jew, this was an irreconcilable contradiction.

There seemed to be a disconnect in their minds between glory and suffering. Thus they did not get it when the Messiah came as the suffering servant instead of the glorified and triumphant King. In fact, their interpretation was that the nation of Israel was the suffering servant of Isaiah 52 and 53, and that the Messiah would deliver Israel from her suffering.

Even the prophets who wrote about the coming Messiah did not fully comprehend it, though they studied it in great detail.

**1 Peter 1:10** *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

It is certainly true that the nation of Israel of the first century would not have intentionally destroyed the very One that the nation had been looking for since its beginning. What they did they did in ignorance, though not in innocence.

The second mitigating factor in this case against the Jews is that, although they were guilty of the death of Christ, their decision, in fact, fulfilled the plan that God had set in motion from before the foundation of the world.

**Acts 13:27** *...those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.*

This was a very similar statement to that which Peter made in his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Chapter 2.

**Acts 2:23** *This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

Through these words of mitigation and mercy, Peter has not made an allowance for sin, but he has offered hope for salvation after a severe sermon. Now that he has made this effort to open their hearts, Peter moves on to the next point in his sermon, the invitation.

Peter is hard on his listeners.

We tend to think that we must appeal to a person's self-esteem – to tell them how much God loves them and what a wonderful plan God has for their lives.

But Peter went straight to the point of guilt.

### **Stephen Cole**

Jesus didn't die on the cross for pretty good folks so that they could feel better about themselves and to help them succeed in life. He died for them because they are sinners who are under God's wrath and judgment.

The Proclamation of the Gospel requires...

1. Exaltation of Christ as Redeemer (Part A above)

Peter did that in both of his sermons. In Chapter 3, he referred to Jesus as Servant (Son), as the Holy One, as Just, and the Prince of Life.

2. Confrontation of Sin and Repentance (Part B above)

In both sermons Peter was very specific and targeted in his pronouncement of the sins of the nation of Israel who had killed the Messiah. And in both sermons, there was a specific call for repentance to avoid the wrath of God.

3. Presentation of Grace and Reconciliation

While Peter preached with conviction and at times with condemnation, he salted his sermons with references to the grace and mercy of God and to how those who are guilty of sin can be reconciled to God once again.

We will see that in the second half of Peter's sermon in Chapter 3 as we look at his...

### C. Invitation – v. 19-23

#### 1. Repentance – v. 19-20

- a. In verse 19, Peter answered the question, “What are we going to do about your sin?”

- 1) Repent – turn from the sinful path you are on
- 2) Believe – turn to the love and obedience to God – (be converted)

These words are found only in the KJV. All other translations use the idea of “turn again,” “turn back,” or “turn to God.”

- b. Then, in verse 20, Peter explains the benefits of repentance and believing:

- 1) Benefit #1 – sins blotted out (v. 19b, some put as 20a)

This is an accounting reference. Accounting was typically done on wax tablets using a stylus. When an error was made or an entry needed to be deleted, the scribe would use the opposite end of the stylus to rub out the entry. That is the meaning here – in the book of records, God rubs out the sin account of those who repent.

- 2) Benefit #2 – times of refreshing by the presence of the Lord (God) in the person of Christ

There is some question about what Peter meant by this phrase and one that comes later, “the times of restoration of all things.” These could refer to the immediate blessing of accepting Jesus as the Messiah and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

These phrases could also be eschatological, meaning that they refer to the second coming of the Messiah when Israel will once again become an integral and vital part of the Kingdom.

Since the word “times” is plural, Peter may have been making reference to both periods.

One commentator paraphrased Peter’s meaning like this...

“You rejected the Messiah the first time He came. Do not be unprepared the next time He comes, for He will return again after a season.”

#### 2. Review – v. 21-24

- a. Christ will remain in heaven until God’s plan is done. (v. 21)

- 1) Only the Father knows when that time will be (**Matt. 24.36**)
- 2) Although He does give us a clue when that time will be

**Matt. 24:14 ...this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

- b. Everything that is happening has been prophesied in the OT beginning with Moses. (v. 21b-23)

- 1) In **verses 22-3**, Peter quotes or paraphrases from **Deut. 18.15-20**: Moses, the first in a long line of prophets, prophesied that the Messiah would be raised up from among the family of Israel and that those who reject Him are left with no hope – they will be destroyed.



**Deut. 18.16** refers back to **Exodus 20.18-21**. The people feared a direct contact with God. Instead, they asked for an intermediary. God granted them this request, and allowed Moses to continue to fulfill the role.

In his sermon, Peter is saying to the Jews that the Messiah also fulfilled that role, and it cost Him his life.

Later in **Deut. 18**, God told the people to beware of false prophets and how they can recognize a false prophet. They were commanded, not only not to listen to the false prophet, but even to put him to death.

The guilt of the people of Israel was that they listened to their leaders and demanded and received the death of the true prophet. And the penalty for such guilt was “utter destruction.”

Less than 40 years later that is exactly what happened. Titus, general of the Roman army and later Emperor, slaughtered thousands and thousands of Jews, and destroyed Jerusalem and well as the Temple.

In fact, the last sacrifice for sin that the Jews ever recognized was held on August 7, 70 AD.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple would bring about the end of the context in which Jesus ministered while on Earth.

Now, the context is the church and Christ’s ministers in the form of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men.

- 2) Though all of this may be hard for the Jews to understand, Peter says, in v. 24, that everything they had witnessed over the previous two or three months had been included in the prophecies of the OT.

There are no prophecies recorded between Moses and Samuel concerning the Messiah and none directly made by Samuel himself, although there is a prophecy concerning the Messiah in the book given Samuel’s name.

**2 Sam. 7:12** *When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.*

### 3. Reminder (of who they are who are listening) – v. 25-26

In light of this review of prophecy and its revelation in the person of Jesus, Peter now connects back to his reference to “the times of refreshing” (v. 19) and “the times of restitution” (v. 21).

Peter tells his listeners,

“You are the children of the prophets and the covenant. You are the fulfillment of that promise to Abraham to bless all families of the earth. (**Gen. 22.18**) Jesus is the fulfillment of the source of that blessing. He is the seed (**Gal. 3.16**); you are the branches.

You are the first generation of the new birth.

God has raised up Jesus in your generation and has blessed you with the gift of salvation through repentance. You are the first of this great and historical nation to see the fulfillment that all previous generations could only look and hope for.



He has blessed you with redemption so that you might be an effective resource for reaching the world.”

At the end of verse 26, Peter renews the call to repentance with a reminder that it is God who gives us the ability to turn away from sin (repent) and to turn toward Him (believe).

What he might have said next, we will never know. For right at this moment in the sermon, he was suddenly, and possibly violently, interrupted.

#### 4. Reaction – **4.1-4**

- a. Arrest – beginning of persecution and the opposition of the Sadducees against the church.

Satan was injured by the words of Peter and by the effect of God’s work in the life of the formerly crippled man. Satan cannot stand success among God’s people and wherever it breaks out, he will attempt to break in.

Yet even with this intrusion into the affair and the arrest of Peter and John and the interruption of the sermon, the Gospel had the effect that God had designed.

- b. Belief

**2 Tim. 2:9** *Because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal, but the word of God cannot be chained.*

In spite of the intrusion and interruption, the Bible says that people responded to the invitation anyway. And the number of men in the church grew to about 5000.

### Conclusion

In the **first half** of his sermon, Peter was very hard on his listeners. Then he seemed to temper his sermon by an infusion of grace by the mitigating circumstances of verses 17-18, saying that they killed the Messiah in ignorance and in fulfillment of the plan of God since the foundation of the world.

In the **second half** of his sermon, Peter is once again very hard. But the overall theme of the sermon seems to be more about blessing than judgment for once again Peter tempers his sermon with mercy through the explanation that God’s purpose is to bless them as the first generation of the fulfilled covenant.

If we return for a moment to Peter’s sermon in chapter 2, we find...

- Christ is the subject
- He is delivered, crucified, and resurrected
- With a promise of His return for a time of judgment

In the sermon in chapter 3, we find something very similar...

- Christ is the subject
- He is delivered, crucified, and resurrected
- With a promise of His return, but the emphasis is not on judgment as much as it is on the times of refreshment (v. 19), restitution (v. 20), and blessing (v. 25, 26)

Looking back over chapters 2 & 3, we see...

- Two assemblies
- Two sermons

- Two invitations
- Two wonderful responses

But before there was a crowd of seekers or a sermon or an invitation or response there was a miracle. Something happened involving God's people.

In chapter 2, there was the testimony of those filled with the Holy Spirit. We do not know what they said, but they spoke to people they had never spoken to before and it changed people's lives.

In chapter 3, there was the healing of a man in such a condition of life that those who knew him best held out no hope for his recovery. There was certainly a distinct and profound change in this man's life as a result of the ministry of the apostles.

When the city heard the message of the people of God and saw lives changed by the power of God, they assembled, they heard the Gospel, and they got saved. And the church grew.

Evidence of the Holy Spirit does not require a display of supernatural gifts such as speaking in tongues. Those affected by the Holy Spirit began to talk to others about the Gospel in the language of the people. But the language was not the important part of that story. What was important is that God's people talked. And people came as a result.

People do not have to experience a supernatural healing of the body to demonstrate a change in their life. The healing might take place in their hearts, their families, or their work habits. The key thing is that lives are changed. And the people take notice and come as a result.

In neither of these cases was there a requirement for a large number of people.

- In the first miracle, there were 120 disciples.
- In the second miracle, only two.

Neither event required any money. In fact, Peter said, "We have no money, but we will give you what we do have – the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

Occasionally, people may drop by a lake to admire the quiet and the scenery when it is convenient, but they will flock to a fire, no matter how much out of the way it may be. And even if they can't make it to the fire, they will wonder about the smoke.

Each church needs to be willing to ask itself a couple of questions:

1. What do people hear when they listen to the members of our church talking?
2. Is there any evidence to the community that lives are being changed here?

People will not come until we invite them to come, and they won't stay if they do not see evidence of the fact that we are serious about our mission and excited about what is happening here.

